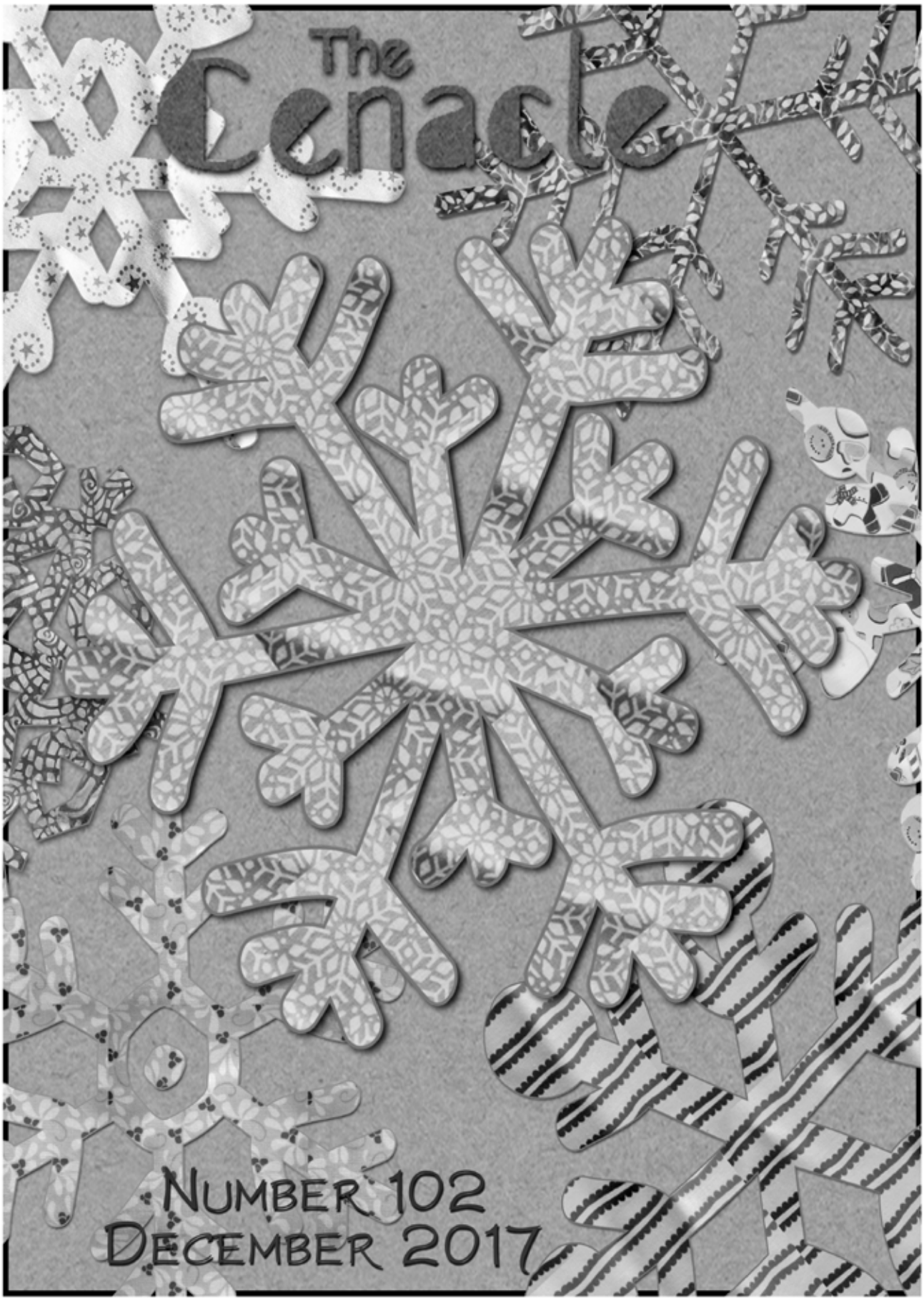
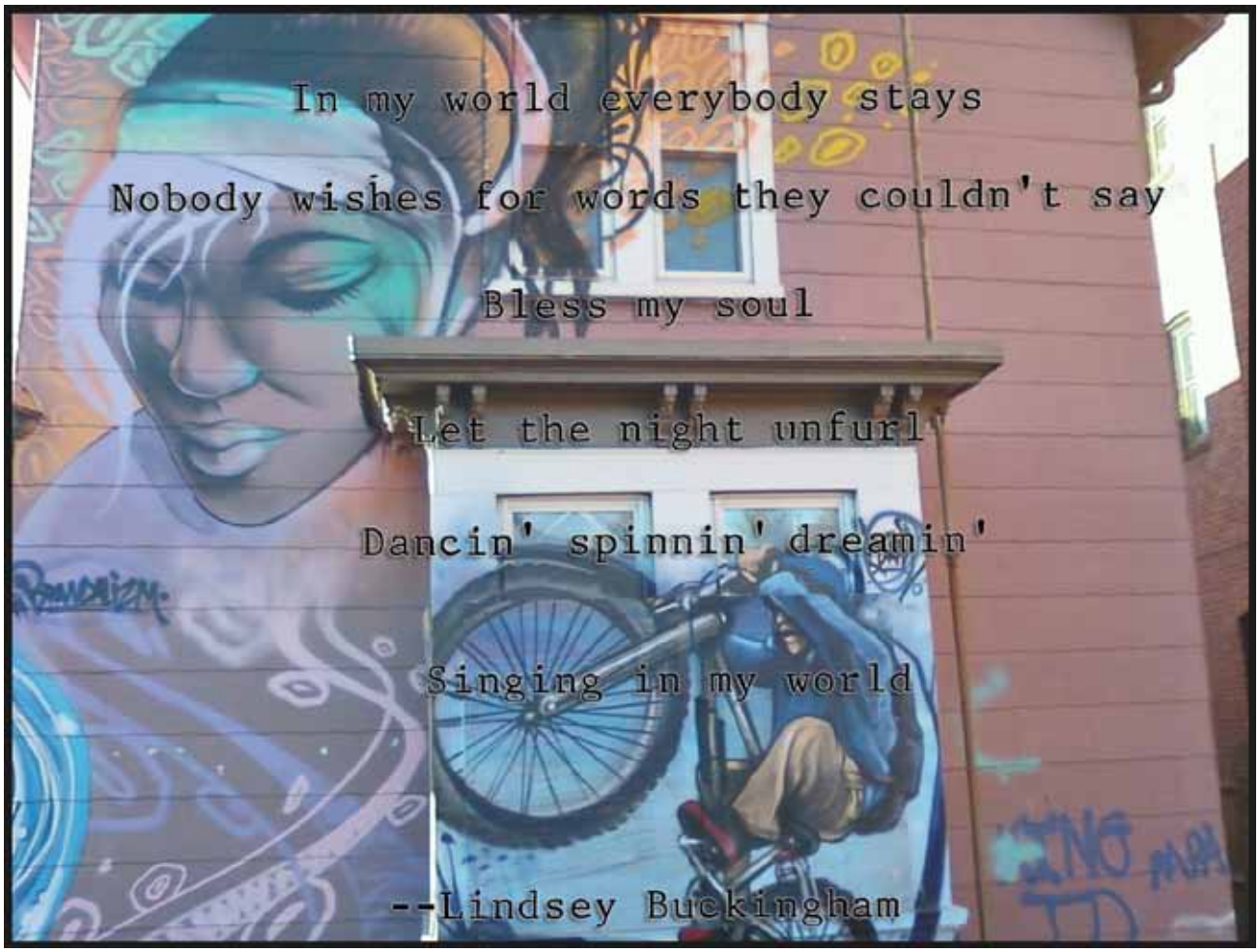

The Cenacle
Number 102
December 2017


In my world everybody stays
Nobody wishes for words they couldn't say
Bless my soul
Let the night unfurl
Dancin' spinnin' dreamin'
Singing in my world
--Lindsey Buckingham

December 30, 2017
8:09 p.m.
Short St. Donutshop-
Rs/KD table
Milkrose, MA.

Dear Jim,

Wow, this letter to you is six years in the writing, begun the early December morning when I learned you'd died the night before in the apartment you shared with your daughters down in Connecticut. At dinner, fallen to the floor. Dead.

I was in the familiar daze I think people get into when a death close to one's heart occurs, & suddenly. And I was a hundred miles away.

A week later, I was on the Greyhound bus, writing a eulogy partly from your own words, your letters, so many of which I've published in The Cenacle.

A church. An assembly of mourners. Your beloved parents, siblings, & daughters. A few of our old friends, ~~a~~ united for the worst, most necessary reasons. You were cremated. Interred on the grounds of a church you'd long not

believed in. Your grown daughters had decided this, to comfort their grieving grandparents.

They & a boyfriend & I had held a kind of hippy wake for you the night before. Tell the story of her story. I'd spent that night in your room, your bed, your guitar, your notebooks, your collection of Cerados nearby.

Spoke my piece. Sat at a restaurant table later with the few friends who had shown up. Haven't seen them since. They too were brothers & unlike you, still live tonight on earth. Bitterness, indifference. Like we don't all fall in the end, like there will always be time.

There won't. That's what your death has taught me. For better & for worse, life is finite, ends when it ends, in an innumerable possible ways.

I've thought about you pretty much every day since then. You were always among my thoughts as my dear friend, fellow artist, teacher, brother.

Sometimes this was good. I dedicated my Tangled Oak poems to you, written a year later. Knowing you would have loved them, played your brilliant guitar to my reading of them, as we'd been doing for decades.

I haven't found another guitarist since I wanted to jam my words to. I hope to. You'd want that. You were the single most generous spirit I have ever known. I can only think of my beloved Kassi in the same way.

Sometimes it's not good. Death is more real to me now, more powerful, more arbitrary. You were the strongest, the most powerful in mind, heart & soul, of my young manhood's fraternity, & yet the rest remain. Do I resent this? Yah, I do. It's wrong. It is.

A few years ago, I began to work with Kassi to get us healthier, lighter, eat greener, use the resources we have, that you didn't have. Like simply, good health insurance. You didn't have to die so young.

Recently, Tom Petty died, & it hit me nearly as hard. But only now, you're both fictional characters in my writing. I miss you both.

Kassi keeps me younger & spritlier than I would be alone. My writing obsessions do most of the rest. We live in a house you never saw. You would have liked it. You would have been proud of me, knowing my story going so far back. That would have meant a lot to me.

I miss you like hell. I probably judge people, myself certainly, by how decently & generously you lived your life. Your devotion to your Art never for a moment negated your devotion to loved ones, or to Nature, to the world. Your music bespoke your love of all, your wish to quarrel with no man. Your wish for this for all.

You believed in peace, love, & rock & roll. Really, truly believed these things. These were your heart-truths, your mind-truths. Your truths.

And, the best thing of all? You were so fucking funny. As only a twinkle-eyed Irishman could be.

For all your brilliance, wisdom, erudition, empathy for all living things, you were so much fun to be around. You could talk to anyone, about anything.

Sitting in your car somewhere, high as fuck, Clapton or The Who or The Beatles or whomever on the radio. Talking, smoking, passing out.

I've wondered how to write this letter to you, Jim. Tell my news, wonder yours? In a way, yes. More to it, I ask you: do we indeed become stars when we die, as you believed? I still write Jellicle Literary Guild invitations to you, now addressed to "The Stars." Wish I knew how to mail them.

You felt Death was part of the deal & surely not the end. I'm sure, you believed, from your family's long lived genes, that you had plenty of

years to go. You died at 58. Fuck too soon.

I write this letter to you as the latest & last piece to appear in Cenacle 102, December 2017, six years since your passing.

I re-read most of this issue's content a final time. Some you knew, or at least would have read. Some not.

At tomorrow night's Jellicle Literary Guild meeting, 29th anniversary, I will, like at every meeting since your passing, include an audio clip of you among the Jellicle Guild Flashbacks I play. Away to keep you at every meeting, if only for a few minutes.

I loved you, James Michael Burke III, love you. Wish I could have saved you from falling dead on your kitchen floor. I couldn't. I'm sorry.

We can't save each other, not really. We can only love each other better, worse, both. I'll write again. ☮ 12/30/2017

Edited by Raymond Soulard Jr.

Assistant Editor: Kassandra Soulard

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Thank you to the Boston Entheogenic Network [BEN] for teaching me, at several wonderful gatherings recently, that the Immutable Phalanx may ever expand, if one but wishes & wills it so.

Scriptor Press
New England
2017

Feedback on Cenacle 101 | October 2017

From Jimmy Heffernan:

I was especially taken with Ace Boggess's lovely poem, "The Feeding of the Birds." As it develops and builds, one is excited and curious to know just where it is going, and the payoff is lovely in its wisdom and elegance. As we read this evocative poem, we experience something we already know, but didn't know we knew. The description and use of imagery in Boggess's work illustrate beautifully the vicissitudes of our feathered companions, and give us a ray of light in a human existence that is suffused by darkness. *Well done.*

* * * * * *

From Ace Boggess:

Nathan D. Horowitz's "Psychedelic Summercamp" is a fun ride. It twists and turns without ever leaving the safety of the familiar. It also rings with poetry masquerading as prose, so that every word seems perfectly in its place. The story is filled with great lines, too. The one that stood out to me was: "The world is summed up in a raindrop that hangs at the tip of a length of blue twine hanging down from a grommet at the edge of one of the roof-tarps." *God, that's gorgeous.* I look forward to reading more of Horowitz's work.

* * * * * *

From Charlie Beyer:

Jimmy Heffernan blows the reality about our "free will" out of the water. Thank you for that. I agree that our will is puny and stupid on the macro scale; we can't fight storms or cruel politics. But we do have "free will" on the micro scale. We can kiss the wife or kick the dog. But there is a cost; the wife bites us and the dog kisses back.

Regarding Martina Newberry's poem, "The First Forty-Four Years": To say you are sorry, but not really be sorry, is false to all. But to admit that you are *not* really sorry, for anything, takes *bold* guts. This poem hits nerves in the heart.

* * * * * *

From Judih Haggai:

Martina Newberry writes in "The First Forty-Four Years" that "being reborn can make a woman mean." The words are strong; the climate these days is strong. More women, every day more, speak out, relate their experiences of being too timid to speak out then, when it happened, *whatever it was,* however much it stabbed their hearts. *Me too!* I'm reborn and I'm mean. I don't worry about his ego—I'm as mean as he was, as they were. And so Martina's words speak to me.

* * * * * *

From Tamara Miles:

Joe Ciccone's poem "Old North Cemetery" has an acoustical quality that I find especially communicative. I hear the ghosts in their echoing movement through graveyards and their whistled tune (is it "Way down yonder in the land of cotton"?). The fog accentuates these breathy sounds with its interspersed silence, a silence confirmed by the bareness of winter trees whose spent leaves crunch under the feet of witnesses to tell a history. The cracking open of ancient tombs and war beasts' howling give me a startle and a shiver. Whale-bones carry wisdom and old mariners' songs. I hear them calling me from the old ship. Glorious piece.

* * * * * *

From Colin James:

Joe Ciccone's poems: I could sit between the lines, look up and let the words just wash over me, if I wasn't intent upon catching each one.

* * * * * *

From Nathan D. Horowitz:

I have become convinced that Charlie Beyer is the second coming of Henry Miller. His work has been growing on me like a basal cell carcinoma. I had to Google "oubliette" ("a secret dungeon with access only through a trapdoor in its ceiling."). As in: "Living in Colorado means being buried in snow and weed. Half the year, cabin fever grows in the dark corners of one's snow-bound oubliette. To compensate, I get addicted to the weed and TV." As the literati say, *that's fucking awesome.*

In "Same Moon Shining," Tamara Miles begins to tell a family story, a quest for the origin of her father. Enquiring minds want to know more.

Each haiku by Judih Haggai is a bird, a clock, an espresso, a loquat, a "single rose / left on a table."

Why is reading Ace Boggess's prison poems such a mentally liberating experience? *Paradoxical!*

* * * * * *

From Tom Sheehan:

In my 90th year, I daily rise from bed between 3 and 3:30 AM, knowing my time is limited, my eyes have begun to see less and less of what I am able to read—and yet working on a novel, a collection of stories, a book of poetry—often torn in one direction before another, making me seek shortcuts, new quick ideas, hoping I don't unconsciously steal from other writers, hear their echoes from some gray reserve.

Yet I wished I had written the piece by Tamara Miles ("Same Moon Shining"), or the poetic lines by Martina Newberry ("Is your own part in this unlikely, misunderstood" . . . "Every thing we know, we've already said / our only hope is to un-know it and begin again— / maybe a little quieter this time"), and Ace Boggess ("I wish I could write myself letters" . . . "I'm an empty chalice next to an empty plate").

Quality speaks for itself. Listen.

* * * * * *

Mark Shorette

To Lydia, of a dream . . .

All I remember, Lydia,
is that your warmth
was held in pendants
clad in purple gingham
with pink roses—
and that your eyes
insisted upon the moment

But why, Lydia,
did you wish
to join
amidst misted stones
at dawn—
and cold sleepers?

All I remember
is that the mystery
of the moment was kept
and that the stones
were the best of runic omens
for that day

* * *

Immersed in the air
as in vapor
as in water we were held in
yelping to be safe

there is no moment
safer than the present
for we come from water
to water
the very substance of the air
is here
acquitting us of the day

* * *

Mystery Collect

when the pure
taciturn
black
comes—

and all are shrouded
in the blinding hidden
you will know
what the hill
has come to say

for all is laid low—
beneath, together, hidden.

* * *

weather

the days

of late

are girt

with grace

and gray

and tussocks

by roadsides

flirt

with frost

and

early mist

* * *

Number Four

a moment's blush
comes today
to those now dying

* * *

One of the stripes
was vermillion
a color of pulse
and purchase
and freedom
in the fresh night
of sand stained
by sun
and centuries
of receiving
the forgotten

I cannot forget
the nameless
for I wear the robe
today
I am brother
to the unnamed.

* * *

Edward Hopper – Room in Brooklyn

Before her
is the mandala
of the half drawn world
where steam-pipes elongate
a nude plump wife
from the waist down

and there are primroses
half illumined
by whitewash
and milkpaint

her shades are higher
as she seeks
her only other living companion

* * *

separation

the bronzed
barebacked
threshers

go to the granary

to perform

violent
acts
of salvation

* * *

in the end
here is the case
to be made—

the silence of the night
is equal
to the day—

sufficient
as the spirit's
resource

the spirit—
siphon of the dark
rosy illuminator
of dusk

spirit—
unseen blaze
slumbering
presence of the day

somnambulant
of the waking hours

called forth
at the rising
of Venus.

* * *

examine:

I am full of contrivances
I am not a tree
I am a sand-footed trickster
of divine desolation
capable of desolating your heart
of capping with light snow
bitter sand
the absent majesty
of desire

but I must say
contrivance is full of verities
perhaps I am a tree
perhaps in a moment of gaudy excess
I am revealed
laid bare
for
my life is my life

* * *

"seen"

witness
cannot be born
to that which remains

for it has not been witnessed
the day, unspent
remains

you

you who have witnessed
our honeyed slide
into decadence
our beauteous descent
into the worlds
of honey
leather
babypink tracks
across the universe of skin
in which we are enfolded

pursuing the way of the peyote button
in our way
free, yet bound
bound to the tender assuaging
of pain

hands

your hands

knead away

with fragrance and skill

the afternoon's chastisement

and

as afternoon yields
to the tribal color
of our marked bodies

I take comfort
in your enfolding arm
and shudder at the portent
of the design
lightly traced upon my forearm
by your enameled
cinnamon

nail.

* * *

And nothing changes anything
with the exception
of time's own deliberateness

I said today
I changed my mind
but reality is
that my mind
is what changed

The paced construction
of uncounted fractions
of seconds
does its deliberate
unending work

As the skies
pronounce and preach
to the anxious
wait,

wait.

mls

* * * * * *

Raymond Soulard, Jr.

Notes from New England

"Please accept this ragged purse
of high notes."

The following continues the series originally called Notes from New England*, begun in issue 24-25 (Winter 1998), then revived in issue 59 (October 2006) as* Notes from the Northwest, *& appearing since issue 75 (October 2010) under its original title. It is intended as a gathering-place for observations of various lengths upon the world around me. It will be culled, like much of my writing, from my notebooks, & perhaps these thoughts will be expanded upon sometimes as well.*

Notes Toward
The Tangled Gate, Redux

December 23, 2017
"Bungalow A"
Ogunquit, Maine

Kassi & I have been spending weekends on or near our wedding anniversaries in this seaside town, Ogunquit; this old hotel; & this room, since January 2013. This our sixth visit here. This long wooden table I write at, the main room's built-in bookshelves, the picture window of the Wide Wide Sea below, all led us to the house we bought north of Boston in the spring of 2013. We named that house Bungalow Cee, & this room, in turn, Bungalow A.

Six is a number I chose long ago to associate myself to specially, attach myself to. I wrote "Immutable Phalanx" letters to six friends & published them in early issues of *The Cenacle* (& even one time invited these friends' responses, which appeared in *Cenacle* 31 | December 1998).

Especially in poetry, I work with six as a sort of understructure. My poems were written under the title *6 x 36 Nocturnes* from 2000 to 2004. 360 poems in all. 2005's *New Songs (For Kassandra)* (published in multiple issues of *The Cenacle,* between #57 | April 2006 & #61 | April 2007) was a total of 180 poems (6 x 30 = 180). I thought my current *Many Musics* series would end after six series of 60 poems each, but then chose to continue, but still 60 poems per series. Newest one from the Eleventh Series in this issue.

First visit here was only a few short weeks since I had finished the *Many Musics'* original 36 *Tangled Gate* poems, in 36 days, on December 8, 2012. These poems were then published in *Cenacle* 83 | December 2012*,* & have led to an ever-enlarging mythical world in the five years & change since. To the arrival at this well-known & beloved room for a *sixth* visit.

We spent some of this visit's snowy icy days walking to the pretty little seasonally decorated town of

Ogunquit, its funky quirky shops of local sweets, beach-inspired art, & the like. To its snowy, slushy beach for a look around, & some photographs for this & next issue of *The Cenacle.*

But a lot of it we were snowed in here, this room, or rooms really, a bedroom & a big open living room. Watching Errol Morris's beguiling new documentary *Wormwood*. Long hours at *Cenacle* 102 editing & graphic arts work. Good, fine hours.

Now this piece. What is, this time? It's a preparation for a kind of deep re-visit, re-visioning of *The Tangled Gate*'s original 36 poems. I'm not sure the details, but would like the 36 of them (again) written by my next birthday, April 28.

Will this work? I don't know. I've been pointing myself toward this idea for a long time. Will this new 36 end the series, reboot it, simply be next? Probably not, hard to say, yes maybe kinda.

For this piece, I'm going to read each poem again, beginning tonight, past tonight, if need be, & react to it, fresh; from years of knowing where it led; from this moment in time. R.E.M.'s wonderful compilation *Part Lies Part Heart Part Truth Part Garbage 1982-2011* on my headphones, streaming on my beloved MacBook Pro, Eurydice. Herself named after my long ago 1998 poetry sequence *Orpheus & Eurydice: Making the Lyre*. Written over a short sequence of days (also published originally in *Cenacle* 31) that eventually inspired my one-a-day poem approach to the *Tangled Gate* poems.

The full text of these poems can be found online at: http://scriptorpress.com/tangledgate36.pdf. And here goes:

i. She Returns to the Island

The Princess wishes to remember some things. She leaves the Pensionne on the Mainland because of a dream in which the Architect asks her to return to the Island, her former home. A friend sails her through the cold winter waters of the Wide Wide Sea to near the rocky shores of the Island. She leaps from the boat, her Blue Suitcase tied to her waist, a goodbye tossed to her friend, & swims, hard & well, under grey skies.

This Island, its Castle, Dancing Grounds, Tower, even the Tangled Gate she was forbade by the Architect as a youth to visit, except in dreams, all matter deeply to her; all, like her father, & the Architect, & his Boy, have been far away from her for years.

Questions: *Who would she be in this poem if she was someone else? Or if she woke up from this poem like a dream? If this poem was the first in a series of dreams of a later iteration of the Princess? Who is this later iteration?*

******

ii. She Remembers the Queen

The Princess has no mother. She has a stepmother she loathes, a masculinely handsome woman, who can only advise her to sniff when men near her. Sniffing is an important activity in these poems, but usually for Creatures, for whom it is a way to assess things like danger, truths, friends or enemies.

Questions: *Why would a simple, bitter woman advise the Princess to sniff? She was superstitious, & made a strange mystic deal with the Beast. What was this pact? What became of this Queen?*

******

iii. She Visits the Dancing Grounds

The King her father talks to the Princess of other worlds, stranger strengths. Every morning the Princess, nude, would dance her dreams into song & message on the raked stones of these Dancing Grounds. Where also the King her father met the demon girl who would consume him entirely.

Questions: *What relation the book of patterns the King & Princess would study by night, to her dreams, to her morning dances? What was the King looking for? Was he looking for Emandia, the home world of those who awoke this world?*

******

iv. She Visits the Castle

The Princess's dear handsome brother with the occasional limp leaves the Island, on his way to the games on the Mainland. Knows of her dreams of the Creatures in the Cavern underneath the Tangled Gate. Sprints alone to the boat. He is not bound for games but for peace-making; it fails, & he is killed.

Questions: *She believes she will see him again, but not in daylight? When? Is he from Emandia too? What of his "occasional limp"?*

******

v. She Passes by The Tangled Gate

Visited as a child only in her dreams, tis a massive & ancient Gate, its lily glow legend, "For Those Lost." Its Fountain, magickal water, insisting a drink. Then, to proceed, a choice: left or right. She dreams of childly adventures in the Gate, with friends, sometimes fleeing the Beast. *No way out but through.*

Questions: *What more of these childly dream adventures? What relation do they have to the waking travel in the Gate which she is now along?*

******

vi. She Sees the Tower, Again Trebles in Time

The Princess feels great tree, sees great Tower, dreams great star-craft. Faces in the stone pillar around which the steps to the Architect's offices twist. The spyglass at the office's window, too heavy for her to move, points down to the ever-changing Tangled Gate she knows from her dreams.

She rejects the Creatures, & the King her father, to come here to be near the Architect, against their warnings, the King's forbidding, to study the Gate. She trebles in time, in that she sees simultaneously with the eyes of her iterates past, present, & future. It's like she is along a path & can see at once from different points.

Questions: *What is & why such a gift & skill? What does it mean that the Tower was a great tree, is now a great Tower, & will become a great star-craft?*

******

vii. The Architect Remembers the Boy

The Architect finds the Boy in the Tangled Gate, hungry & terrified, befriends him, & teaches him to steer through many worlds. When the King is arraying all boys & men on the Island for War with the Mainland, the Architect takes the Boy away on a skyward, & then finally seaward, escape.

Questions: *Who is the Architect's Boy? Wherefrom? How so powerful? Where does he go upon his final plunge from the sky into the Wide Wide Sea?*

******

viii. The Architect Watches from His Tower

The Princess & the Architect know each other across stars & centuries. He haunts her Gate-wandering childly dreams. A kind of love story, but I wonder if more?

Questions: *Is there a later iterate of the Architect? Does he dream these poems too?*

******

ix. The Architect in Exile

The Architect travels from a nameless future back to the moment when the King & his followers, having lost a War to the Zealots on the Mainland, retreat to the Island.

Questions: *Was this a "retreat" to an Island with the ageless & powerful Gate? Or a false retreat? Why would the King's enemy let him take refuge in a place of unimaginable power? The King believes the Gate is a weapon, but what kind? How used? For what purpose?*

******

x. The Architect is Her Teacher, Her Hummingbird

This world's origin myth is about a Hummingbird who taught men how to sing, & how one day they will remember their first song, & fly away.

The Architect guised as Hummingbird teaches the Princess to *twice believe*, that there is a hole in her bedchamber wall, leading to the Creatures in the Cave underneath the Tangled Gate, & that there isn't one. If yes by dreams, & no by waking, then neither just yes, nor just no, but yes/no.

Questions: *Is the Hummingbird myth related to Emandia, to these origins? Was humankind given consciousness by Emandians, or is it descended from them?*

******

xi. The Architect's Record of the Time Beyond Time

The Architect comes from the future, from beyond the Dreaming, the ruinous far end of human history, to where he is now, thinking the Princess is the thread & clue out of time.

Questions: *He comes back with what kind of help from the Emandians? Why do they choose to help the Architect & the Dreamers at the ruinous far end of human history try to avert disaster?*

******

xii. The Architect Sees Her, & Again

Dreamers drank potions to cross the Dreaming back into history, only to find more chance & chaos than patterns to influence. The Architect has known the Princess over the centuries, & she always looks the same, & she still carries the Blue Suitcase he gave her.

Questions: *What other times do the Architect & Princess meet? What occurs between them? What is the nature of their relation?*

******

xiii. The Queen & Her Beast

The Queen was stolen from her palace in the sun, married off to the Island's King, him a widower, as a bargaining chip to avoid a War. She brings her own retinue of seers & witches, & eventually encounters the Beast & contrives a pact with him.

Questions: *War between the King's Island people & whom? Why did the King agree to marry her when he still deeply mourned his first Queen, Deirdre? What was it like when she cloaked in Deirdre's look & touch in their bed? What did she learn in these intimate encounters? What kind of a pact does she make with the Beast, & what is the nature of her new knowing?*

******

xiv. The One Woods & Its Beast

The Beast *is* the world, *of* the world, *from* the world, emerges from *the maw at the heart of the world*. Stays often near his best-known oaks, seems to manifest in Artists sometimes, like the power in their creative force, Art where world & humanity cross, perhaps percolate.

Questions: *Does the Beast have any relation to the Emandians? Does the Beast have a natural form?*

******

xv. World's Wish & Its Beast

The Beast is within all too—binds all in the world. The Beast possesses a profound empathy for all life because the Beast seems to inhabit all life & understand all joys & sufferings of living things. *There is no final thing to know.*

Questions: *Is there worship or reverence for the Beast over the course of human history on this world? General awareness of the Beast's existence as a kind of living god made of the world's very living stuff?*

******

xvi. The Beast & His Partner

The Beast & Partner are estranged, & only walk together in dreams. The Partner believes they must crack the maw at the heart of the world to fuel a kind of transformation, & then blow through the heart of the world.

Questions: *Were they once a man & a woman? What are the Eternals they fooled with? Were these Emandians or others? What transformation do they seek? How to break the maw, what its power?*

******

xvii. The Beast & the Princess

The Princess & the Beast first meet in her childly dreams, often playing a game of creating things like iterates of MeZmer the White Bunny from the music in the air. Now he wants her help in transforming the world.

Questions: *What help does the Beast want from the Princess? What would the world be like then?*

******

xviii. The White Bunny & the Beast

The Beast & MeZmer stay together often, & then she leads him to the strange farm called Clover-dale. His form becomes the Princess's as he follows, as MeZmer leads him/her to the Carnival Room. There are black & white threads that seems to guide his path there & back. There is a force trying to convince the Beast to help save the human world, not destroy it.

Questions: *Is it destruction the Beast wants? What is MeZmer's purpose in their travel to Clover-dale?*

******

xix. At the Fountain

The water of the Fountain tastes like remembering. The Architect long ago had responded to the Princess regarding traveling the Gate thusly: he tapped his head once, his heart once, twice his nose. Emphasized sniffing, like the Queen does to her.

She discovers the oak box of colored threads he left for her. *Many kinds of time, the binds of time, & how it looses to the air!* Box larges & shrinks to needed size. Green thread: *recover something dear*, & suddenly there are Creatures!

Questions: *What are these threads? And what are the many kinds of time?*

******

xx. Remembering Her Exile

The Architect tells the Princess that the Beast in the Tangled Gate does not consume War tributes from the Mainland, but bears them far away. Before the King's planned invasion of the Mainland, the Architect arranges for the Princess, the Hero, & the tributes to make secretly away from the Island. Then the Hero leaves her & a few others on another Island, from which she eventually makes her way to the Mainland. The War ends, but no winner. The Princess, in disguise, ends up at the Pensionne, where she lives for years.

Questions: *Where does the Beast take the tributes? What is the Mainland like?*

******

xxi. She Follows the Traveling Troubadour

She follows the Traveling Troubadour for a while. She dreams of the Architect & a Cave, & he compels her & Creature companions—MeZmer, Rosa!eeta the tiny cackling imp, & Boop, who looks like a turtle but isn't one—into the Cave, and something strange happens. They wake, not remembering. She next chooses the crimson thread: *for greater understanding*.

Questions: *Who is the Traveling Troubadour who leads her along, unseen but his music clearly heard? What occurred in that Cave in her dream?*

******

xxii. Wherefrom the Beast

The Princess again encounters the Beast, who is troubled & unable to tell her why. She trebles in time & sees the future collapsing back.

Questions: *What does a future collapsing back look like? How does history in this world seem to move in both directions?*

******

xxiii. The Encounter

By waking this time, the Princess encounters the Architect in her travels through the Tangled Gate. He is closely assessed by her Creature companions, who are dubious of his intent. They allow him to follow them at a distance.

Question: *What don't the Creatures like about the Architect? Do they understand his intentions? Does he sniff wrong to them?*

******

xxiv. A Wish to Heal

The Architect tells the Princess that she is from Emandia, a far away place, sent to affect & to judge this world. She is powerful, trebles in time, dreams powerfully. Carries the Blue Suitcase & its potent materials like the box of colored threads. The world cares for us but belongs to something else. She selects the purple thread: *A wish to heal.*

Questions: *What is the nature of healing? Is it physical, psychical, spiritual, other?*

******

xxv. The Pensionne & the White Tiger

The Princess finds Gate paths crumbling, begins to repair them, & discovers her old friend Ringling the White Tiger there too. He is a teacher, a Tender, & she became his apprentice when they met in the Gardens of the Pensionne.

She heard stories of the War between the King her father & the Zealots when she lived at the Pensionne. Many there wished for the King to burn these Zealots & destroy them utterly.

Questions: *What has partially ruined the Gate such that it is in need of repair? Why does the Princess not seek out the King again? What becomes of him?*

******

xxvi. Another Kind of Thread

They restore the paths to the Gate till the purple thread runs out; she ties the thread to a tree branch, buries the box of threads in the earth at the foot of the tree. She & Ringling then ride together swiftly, her trebling in time as they pass through the One Woods, to the hill above the buildings of strange Clover-dale. Ringling will go no further, & they amicably part.

Questions: *What is Clover-dale? What spooks Creatures about it?*

******

xxvii. She Enters Clover-dale

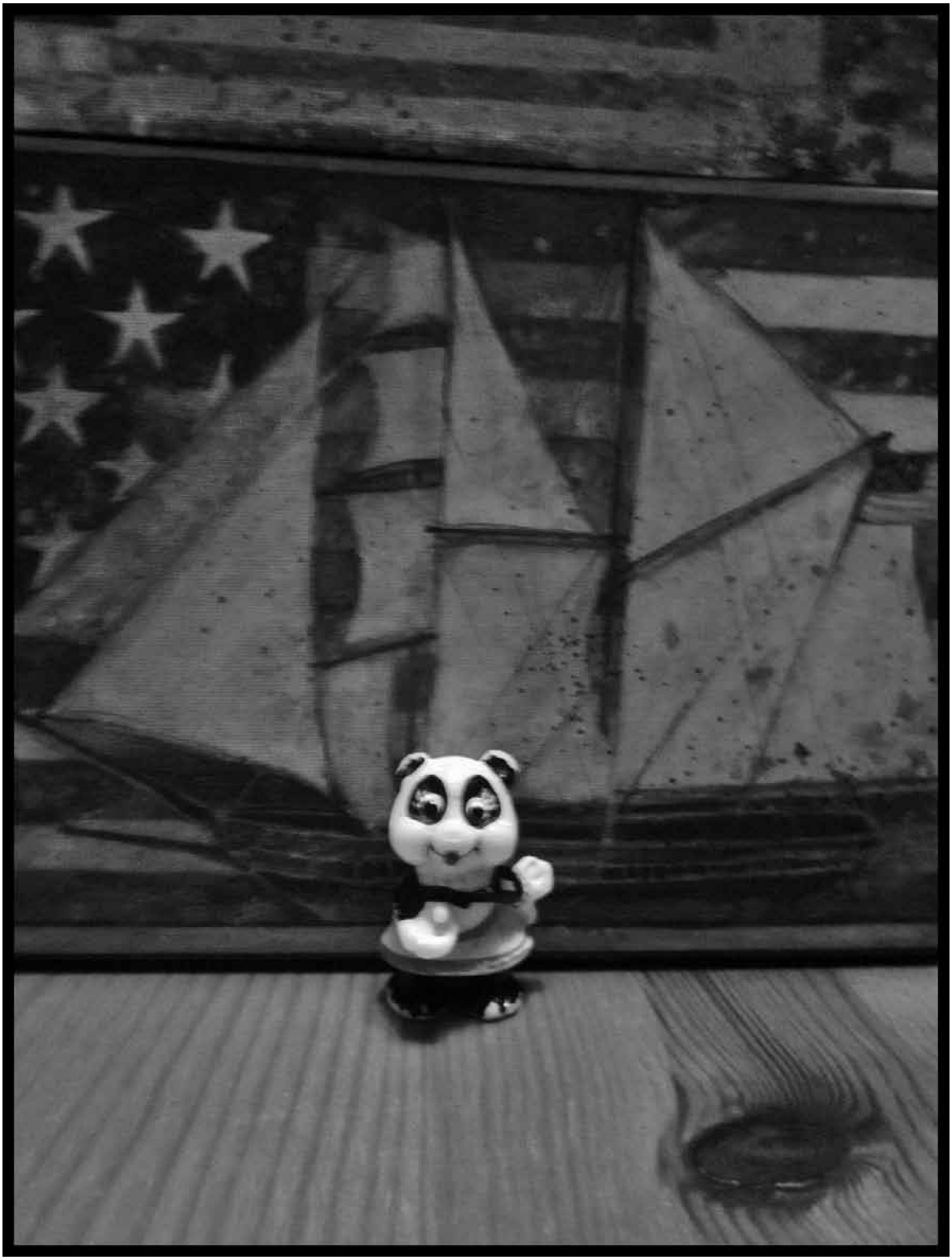
Crumbling steps. Cluttered first room. Mirrors fill the second one. Then desert & a strange little imp-like man. They gnatter together, treble in time. He advises her to keep going & find the Carnival Room.

Questions: *Does the little man have something to do with the Dreaming? Is he related to Emandians?*

******

xxviii. The Carnival Room

In first childly dream through the hole in her bedchamber, she'd heard the Singer; then met MeZmer, Rosa!eeta, Boop, & others. They made the Singer a box of little gifts.



Questions: *Does she enter the Carnival Room again? Is the swiftly moving train-like carriage within it? Is the unseen singer the Traveling Troubadour?*

******

xxix. The Carriage Through

On the carriage the Princess encounters again the Architect's Boy, remembers his fumbling attempts to seduce her when they were youths, & regrets her laughing at him. He warns her of those she is traveling to meet, how they will try to consume her. She arrives to the Cave of the Dreamers at the ruinous far end of human history. They show her around, but quickly expect she will save them, *there isn't time.* As they press upon her, there is a great roar though time & space.

Questions: *What becomes of the Boy? Is this really him, or some vision of him? Do the Dreamers know who the Princess is?*

******

xxx. New Ways to Heal

Architect bonds with MeZmer, Rosa!eeta, & Boop, & their travels bring them to the tree with the Princess's purple thread tied to it, & the box of threads buried below. The Architect braids the remaining threads in the box together, & they continue on, resolved to find her.

Questions: *What is the nature of these threads' power? Who created them?*

******

xxxi. The Believers

The King loses everything when he and his Brothers go into the Cave of the Beast to do battle. Six go in & only two come out, & are now become sworn enemies.

Questions: *Who is the narrator of this poem? What was the deal the King made with the Eternals for the girl? Did it fail? What Saviour does the narrator of the poem refer to?*

******

xxxii. The Architect's Record of Time Beyond Time (ii)

The force of human history is on the side of the fist, not the open hand. This world begot from the ashes of other worlds. The Tangled Gate preceded human history, is the source of dreams. A child, the Princess of these poems, is ordained to come to this world, to judge it, to condemn it possibly, & thus become the essence of the world to carry beyond its failure. The Architect wants to help.

Questions: *What goes out of the world if condemned? What remains? Do the human inhabitants know these things, or does the world simply burn out till dead?*

******

xxxiii. The Road Away

The Princess & Beast again. Beast claps up an iteration of MeZmer, says Creatures come from the dreaming mind, the shaping hand. Says *where there is life, there is choice. But sometimes not the ones we would wish.* They part.

Questions: *What happened to the Beast's plan? Why does he seem to despair now?*

******

xxxiv. Processional

The Princess discovers the Eternals' processional away, their preparation for departing this failed world. She disguises as MeZmer to travel among them, discovers a braided thread she keeps close to, & eventually ends up at the Wide Wide Sea, where they are washing & preparing.

She meets the Hero, who tells her that he had always been directed by The Architect in his actions with her. He is here to accompany her, guide her. Tells her she will decide what will be. They dance by fire & drums in the evening.

Questions: *The Hero is Emandian too? Do the Eternals/Emandians assume the Princess will decide this world is another failure?*

******

xxxv. Fasting Day

Travels with Hero. She recalls her childly days with the Creatures, & a strange masque one time where her friends guised as beautiful men & women. She trebles in time. Talk of Red Bag, doorway to dreams. She gives the Hero her totem resembling Rosa!eeta, takes his hand in friendship.

Questions: *What are the Creatures in relation to humankind? How does the Red Bag relate to the Tangled Gate?*

******

xxxvi. One, Many, None

The deepest truth of a human heart is its yearns. Kindness most binds. They come to a Temple/Cave. A basin of water to drink by, like the Fountain.

She enters, sees visions in the blackness within. The book of patterns. Her brother. The King her father's demon lover. Her childhood. Song of the Hummingbird.

Then the Architect & the Creatures are with her. The Creatures urge her to choose this world, to stay not go, to fill the maw at the heart of the world. Architect tells her he wrongly believed they could make a world without flaws.

She thinks again of the King her father, his demon lover, of the Traveling Troubadour, of her flight to

the Sea as all the rest to War. She thinks of the Blue Suitcase & the box of threads.

She doubts. World begins to shake apart, but then she sings & starts to fill in the maw with all she has known & loved. Pushes back, healing the world. Her friends try to help.

Finds herself diving into the Sea, bidding goodbye to the Hero in his boat. She has remembered some things. She arrives again the Island.

She will let it molder back to One Woods. She goes to the Tangled Gate, to the Fountain, this time neither left nor right but *through* the Fountain, to the Cave underneath with her Creature friends. *Healing is hereon.* Returns to the best-loved place of her long ago childly days.

Questions: *What are the final fates of the Princess & the Architect? What does the world look like for her saving it?*

******

Additional notes derived from Dream Journal, 28.December.2017:

There are those who exist multiply in space & time, throughout history—these are Emandians like the Princess; those taught by the Emandians, like the Architect; &, of course, the Creatures.

The Architect had traveled back from the ruinous far end of human history, & then cut ties with that future, in his search for the Princess, whom he believed could save the world from a ruinous end. He too seems to iterate on in time, at least the poems imply. Or, since he is given by the Emandians the same near-immortality they possess, does he simply move through great swatches of history because of this gift, & thus encounter iterations of the Princess in different times?

The Creatures can iterate more than one of themselves in a single place & time, as well as multiply throughout history. This is curious.

The Princess, as noted above, can *treble in time*, which means she can synch the distinct consciousnesses of her iterated selves through history into one, & thus see past, present, & future in one picture. What might result from this? A way to align the crucial points in human history in a way that results in a non-disastrous ending?

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December 29, 2017
"Bungalow Cee"
Milkrose, Massachusetts

This compendium of comments & speculations is now complete, & I hope it will prove to have been a helpful exercise toward writing these new poems. I have worked so hard & so variously on the Tangled Gate myth that I expect each new aspect of it that I produce to be of the highest Art I can produce. I feel like it is a gift I have received, a way of tying all my works together in a culminating one that can take all my writings to new places for years & years, stay fresh, novel, exciting. What next I can only wonder happily about.

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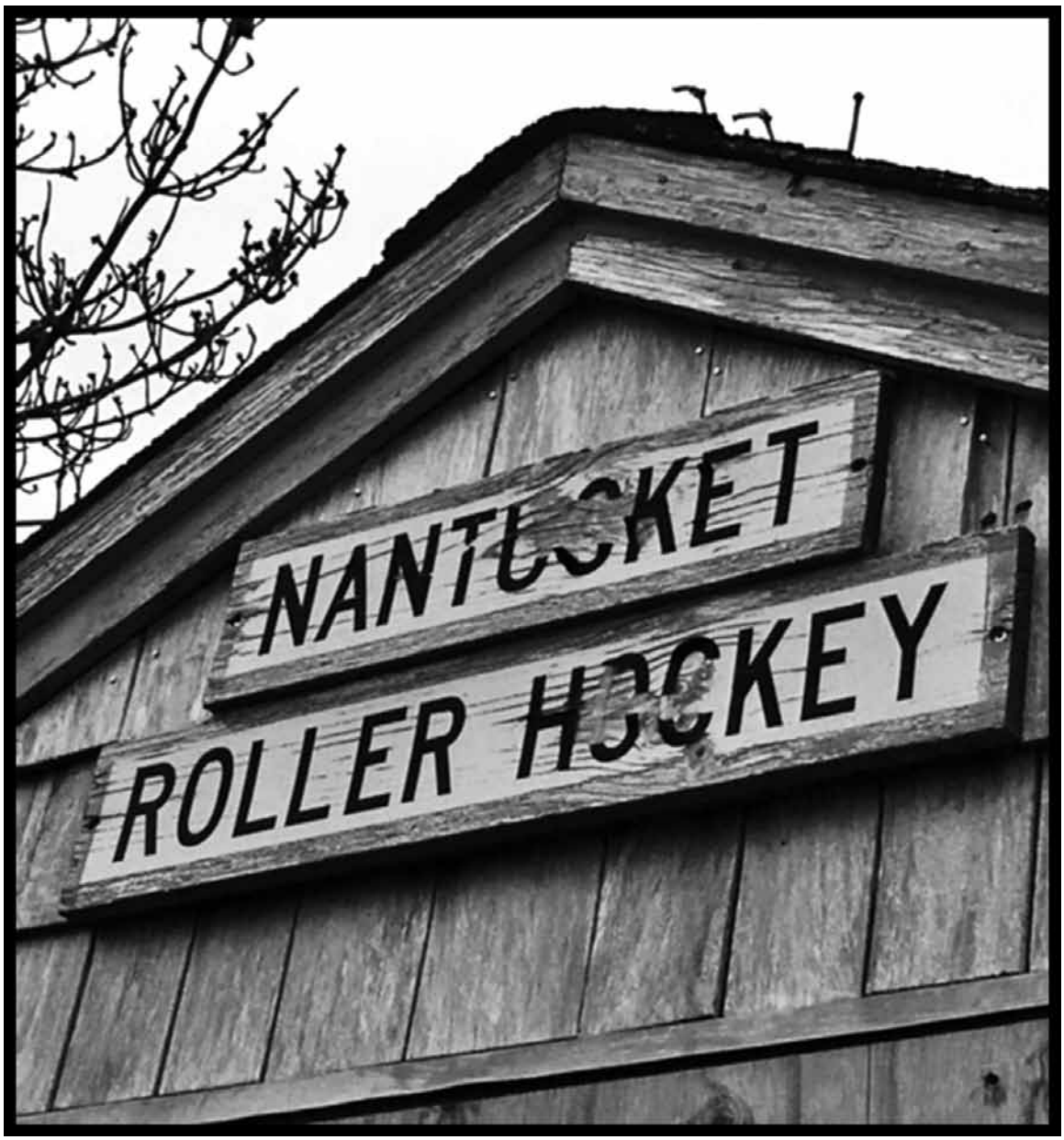


Joe Ciccone

Joe Ciccone

Island of Bone

You entered this life looking for me
and I set out looking for you

So we arrive again on this
island of bone where gray is

not gray where you can follow the
shoals all season and keep arriving

at the same point
Like a plover returning again

to this pebbly beach
you entered this life looking for me

and I set out looking for you and
in this manner even now it goes on

* * *

Seafood

My father took a ride to the oceanside
ate a lobster and died

That was twenty-two years ago
Soon we will be the same age

My children do not understand
this libation

why this kindly bug pinks up and
cries out

why I toss the first knuckle flesh
into a roiling brine

asking for favors from a god
only my father has met

lest tomorrow their Daddy too
might be gone

* * *

Crisis on Main Street

I try to love you
by writing a poem

but there are simply
not enough words

I try to find you
but the horde is tripping

on cobblestone
In a centuries old window

a red and yellow bouquet
for hire

No
There are simply not enough flowers

* * *

Perspective

So long at sea the naked fisherman
is lost in an ocean of land

* * *

Moby Dick

Sometimes the little thing you
get hung up on

is as big as a
whale

* * *

Morning

I wake beside you
as if returning from a voyage

to a perfect white room
and somewhere through these

windows of white fog
the scrub oak and beyond that

the Atlantic
tight as sky on a mountain

For a moment we're the whole of our
split halves as in our last life

as if love were something more
than an endless goodbye

* * *

What do I

What do I know but fear
What do I see but that which confuses me
What do I feel
but the first knots of age
and that old familiar love
where do I live
but in the dimmer spaces of the brain
like ellipses from all the old blows

And what do I hear but that same music
saying you know nothing
you see nothing
Take comfort man
There is nothing

OK so where then shall I go?
One might say anyplace forward
yet I have not plans for departure
no place of arrival
I'm just sitting on a cat boat
in Nantucket harbor
which is as still as a millpond
and I am already there

* * * * * *

Tamara Miles

Same Moon Shining

[Memoir Excerpts]

Under My Feet

"When I lost you, it was as if all the solid ground dissolved from under my feet.
Look at me; I'm a half-drowned man now, hanging onto a wreck."
– Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House*

Today I found a piece of sheet music at a rummage sale: *Tarantella in E Minor, piano solo*, by Hal Perrin. Like such much else, it was timely because the Tarantella dance is a key feature of the play *A Doll's House,* by Henrik Ibsen, involving a woman (Nora) who leaves her family behind. She does so because she has discovered that her husband does not truly love her; he "loves" her only as long as she lives the way he wants her to, as the doll in the house, the mother and wife who follows societal standards. Although she has sacrificed much for him, he is not the hero she was certain he would be for her.

The play was scandalous when it came out. *To make such a woman a kind of heroine! To allow her to speak for herself, and to make sense. To think that a woman has a right to exist outside of her husband and children!* The Tarantella dance, performed earlier in the play at her husband's request, shows Nora at her most sexual, her most liberated in physical form. Her husband is entirely enchanted by her in the costume—but, after all, at this point he believes he owns her, and therefore her wildness is no threat. It is only when she decides to leave him, after he has been incredibly cruel, that he feels the extent of his loss. The ground he has felt was solid dissolves from under his feet.

When Alma, my adoptive grandmother, left her husband and my father in 1955, and ran away with her brother-in-law, we may suppose it was for no grand reason such as Nora's. She had made no great personal sacrifice previously; she had not been terribly disappointed by her husband. She was no feminist symbol chosen by a playwright to examine marriage as a troubled institution.

Maybe . . . but what do we know of her personal sacrifices, really? How much does anyone know about someone else's marriage? The one thing we do know is that my father, caught in the middle, got hurt, and that his father Clinton went looking for his wife. She must have been worth something to him. He must have loved her. He never said a bad word about her to my father.

It is not the business of this writing to defend or excuse Alma, only to seek understanding for women—for people in general—who run away from their responsible, decent, ordinary lives. At any rate, there is more to the story—for, you see, Alma came back home. The wild dance that she did with Albert did not go exactly as planned.

* * *

We Won't Go Home Till Morning

Another of my rummage sale finds this week is a 1943 book of *Music, Calls, and Directions for Old-Time Dancing*, which includes the Perrin tune referenced above. Here are some of the instructions:

Wait first eight bars.
Address your partners all.
Dos-a-dos on the corners.
Swing your partners once around and head couple leads to the right.
Chasse' by and salute opposite.
Chasse' back and salute your own.

Given my mention of the Tarantella dance, it seems right, now, to consider this couple's dance and the waiting, dos-a-dos, swinging back around, and saluting involved as we take another look at the inhabitants of the house on 8th Street in Kansas City.

It had been about six months since Alma and Albert had left town together when Clinton got a phone call from his wife. Albert was in prison for writing bad checks. As Dad recalls, Alma had also been writing bad checks, which tells me that neither she nor her travel companion had any other means to live by in California. Albert was a house painter, but Dad said he never had seen him work much; he preferred drinking.

"What do you think Alma saw in Albert?" I asked Dad, who had said his uncle had "always looked a little rough to me."

"I think Albert had the gift of gab," he said. He used to see the two talking together in the kitchen when Clinton was at work. It's a reasonable observation; from what I know about women, we do want somebody we can talk to, somebody who's listening and talking back.

Presumably, Albert had thought he could line something up in California. Work, maybe, but I've discovered he also had a few other relatives living there that he probably thought he could fall back on as needed.

As for Alma, I do not know whether she had ever worked outside the home. I know nothing of her life before she married Clinton at 22, but she had not been employed during the time of their marriage. If she had gone out to California thinking Albert would provide, she was mistaken.

On the phone, she said she wanted to come home, and asked if her husband would please send her a plane ticket. He did so, and when she came home, as far as Dad recalls, they never talked about what had happened. "I don't think they wanted to talk about it," Dad says. They tried to pick up their lives and go on.

It might have worked, except that when Albert got out of prison (he wasn't in there long), he headed straight back to Kansas City, and straight to Clinton and Alma's door again.

Perhaps the strangest part of this strange story is that Clinton let him in the door, and even back in his old bedroom. You've read this right. Clinton wanted to forgive both his wife and his brother. Having no siblings, I may be unable to fully appreciate the bonds of family, and the love that an older brother may have for a younger for whom he has felt responsible, but it's beyond me that the three lived together again. Briefly, that is, because, I hate to say it, after a few weeks, Albert and Alma took off again, and this time Albert stole more than his brother's wife. He took war bonds that Clinton had been saving for my dad, and he took his guns.

* * *

Brother, Where You Bound?

There would be no more trips out west looking for Alma, and Clinton told my Dad that it would be best if he never saw Albert again because if he did, he would want to kill him. This was the last time that Dad would see his adoptive mother and, when she called the house again a few years later, the third Mrs. Shelton, Betty McCully, answered and said she need not bother.

At first, Dad had trouble accepting Betty's presence in the house, but when he grew used to the

idea, he called her Mother, and she is the only one he naturally uses this term for even today. Betty and Clinton were happy, and lived together for the rest of their lives.

Dad doesn't remember Clinton ever talking about his other son, and does not believe he had much of a relationship with him.

"I don't think they got along," is all that Dad recalls. "He told me I had a half-brother at the same time that he told me I was adopted, when I was about ten, and that the brother was a lot older than me."

By my own calculations, the half-brother would have been in his early 20s at that time, and living in New Jersey. He had been in the Marines. Dad didn't care to know more, so this opportunity for a family connection was lost as well. (It's possible that he visited Clinton at the house on 8th Street, before Alma left, but we do not know for sure.)

When he and I visited Kansas City several years ago to spend some time with Dad's cousin Jack and his family, we found among Clinton's memorabilia a photograph of a young man with the name "Bobby Shelton" on the back. It may well have been Dad's long-lost brother. Our efforts to locate this person have not paid off. It is another story of extended and perhaps permanent estrangement in this family saga.

* * *

Separation

Marital life being what it is, estrangement between partners is not unusual. I've been reading about a novelist this week, Rumer Godden, whose first husband decided he wanted to be a soldier and did not see his way to combining that ambition with being a husband. He left her with massive debts. The good news is that she was able to pay off those debts with the sales of her novel *Black Narcissus.*

In her book *Runaway Husbands: The Abandoned Wife's Guide to Recovery and Renew*al, Vikki Stark emphasizes how sudden marital abandonment, despite its initial and prolonged wounding, can be an opportunity for women to reinvent themselves.

In the early stages of separation, the one who is left behind often absorbs herself in trying to understand why her partner went away. This is similar to an abandoned child's response. Healing for the abandoned person comes when his or her thoughts are turned again toward understanding the self, and toward a new future rather than attempting to figure out answers about the past that may not come for a long time, or may never fully come.

My father was still living with his questions when he became interested in military life. At seventeen, he was tired of high school and did not care to finish. He went to see an armed forces recruiter, and then he went to Clinton and asked if he could have his permission (and his signature) to join because he was still seventeen. "Where do I sign?" was all that his father said, probably because it was clear by then that Dad would not pursue any further education and had no career prospects.

He quit school, and was put on a train the next morning to Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas, where he started basic training in March 1960. He was in training for about ten weeks.

When graduation day came, he had orders on the board for flight mechanic school at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas. He spent three or four weeks in the school, but he knew right off that since he had not had much education, he would fail the exam at the end of the course. So he went and asked the commander if he could take it again. The commander said he wasn't doing very well and that he would be discharged.

Dad said, "Please don't. I joined to do a good job and receive an honorable discharge. Don't you have anything for me to do?"

And the commander said, "Have you ever painted?"

"Just around the house," Dad said.

"Well, we have a plane leaving out of here tomorrow or the next day going to Andrews Air Force Base in Washington, D.C. Do you want to go?"

He said, "Yes, sir," and went up there to learn how to be an aircraft painter. He worked nights under a civilian contractor and his crew.

Dad said to me: "We got along real good. I got to where they figured I could do without a supervisor there. Well, I sort of had a supervisor, but he was an old man called Pop. Chewed tobacco all the time. If I couldn't find him, I just followed his tobacco tracks.

"The two of us worked together, alone on the night shift. He was real nice to me, and funny, and I was there until my tour was over. Then I was out on the flight line doing something the day I was to be discharged, or the day before, and the military came around taking re-enlistments, but I figured they didn't need no painters.

"I asked anyway if I could re-enlist, but the man said no because I did not have a second trade to fall back on, and the next day I received a little card that said *Honorable Discharge. March 31, 1964.* I was discharged."

* * *

Sylvia / Mama

He met Sylvia a couple of months before his discharge at a party downtown in Washington, D.C. Mama was there with Joyce (her roommate), and Dad and Mom started dating. They went to the movies and the museums and things like that.

"I knew she really liked me. I didn't know about love, but I had strong feelings for her too, so we had decided after a couple of months to get married. We had decided that we loved each other, and I said, 'Well, I guess we need to get married,' and she agreed.

"I asked when she wanted to get married, and she said, 'how about sometime around Easter?' We decided on May 16, and we had a couple of friends there when we got married. I don't remember where it was, maybe a church, no big wedding. It might have been a justice of the peace. We lived a couple of weeks in her apartment, and Joyce was there too, but she moved out. She knew three was a crowd. We really didn't have money for a honeymoon."

They actually got in a fight at the Washington Monument the same day they got married, but he doesn't recall why. It might have been about going to Alabama. Mama was working for the FBI and was homesick. She wanted to go home, so they planned to go south to Huntsville, Alabama. He was so mad he remembers wanting to throw her off the top of the monument.

"I knew she was real close to her mother and dad. More to her mother than her dad because of the way he was. Next thing I know, we were on a train headed there. Her brother Buddy picked us up at the station and took us to the little house in New Market. She told me she had twelve brothers and sisters, but it didn't sink into my head, but when I got there, everyone was hanging around, getting introduced, etc."

They stayed there just a few days, and then they got an apartment on Beirne Avenue. They had a lot of disagreements. On Saturdays and Sundays, when he was off work, he was trying to figure out what he wanted to do. He worked at a grocery store, maybe Winn Dixie, as a stock boy, and he did that for only about three weeks.

"I didn't want to do that. Then I went to a body shop and worked there not very long, five weeks or so, and didn't know anything about bodywork, just painting. I wanted to paint cars, but they said bodywork goes along with it, and you'd have to go to school for that, so I said no.

"I worked for some outfit painting houses for a while, and just bounced around, and Sylvia got me all the information for a job at Brown Engineering (she worked at Boeing). When I got that job, I stayed there from about late 1965, just before you were born, to 1969.

"I was there when you were born. We had a fuss that morning, stupid me, my fault, and I went to work, and I called home and didn't get an answer. I knew that she must have gone to the hospital to have the baby, but I continued working until I got the phone call from the hospital, and then I rushed on up there. It was just up the street a hop from where I worked. She drove herself to Huntsville Hospital. We had three cars: two '56 Chevrolets and a '64 Chevrolet Impala. Stupid me."

Mama drove the Impala. He wanted her to be safe. Mama had "twilight sleep" when I was born, and she stayed in the hospital for about a week.

"Then we brought you home, and right off the bat, we had a lot of problems, all my fault, I wanted a pool table, stupid. The apartment wasn't big enough for a pool table, so I made your room into the pool room because you were sleeping with your mother and me anyway. We'd have had a nice life if I hadn't done all that. I think your mother really loved me. I think she did. The guys came over to play pool, Ashcroft and Castleberry, and we were all drinking."

Mama didn't like that. Too much noise and carrying on, and he was mean when he drank.

"I don't think I was that mean," Dad says. "I know I slapped her that one time." I remind him of what my aunt told me, that he once beat her up so bad she couldn't go to work, after he had complained that she didn't have a job, so she got one. It was the first week of that job, and she lost it because of the absence.

"It was the alcohol that made me do it," he says. "Write this in your book," he adds. "Tell them I've got remorse for that, and I've been quit drinkin' for 27 years."

* * * * * *

Riddles

Max, six, flipped and fell
fifteen feet from the second floor
banister at Spreckels Mansion,

his last word "Ocean,"
the name of the pup he tripped over
while riding a skateboard
in the house.

Along with the chandelier
he lay shattered,
his heart deprived
of oxygen from the blow
to his brain.

Hospitalized—
he had not yet died—

when his father's
girlfriend, his only guardian
that night, and an artist,

put a noose around her neck,
they say,

and painted on the door
in black, before she bound
her wrists and swung
herself nude over the balcony:

She Saved Him—
Can You Save Her?

Always, in a family,
too many pronouns
to know for sure
what really happened.

* * *

Man Pleads Guilty to Trying to Smuggle Tiger Cub

I wanted his teeth, his young
finesse,

his staggering beastly beauty
to be mine;

I wanted a little portion
of God. I craved his restless sway,
his tumble and roll freedom movement.

I admired him—I thought above
all else he should be mine as recompense
for all I've been denied in this body,

next to his, a shadow.

I can but walk to work or go in cars
to places ordinary.

He can climb higher.

I wanted his grace,

the way his tail diverts onlookers
from the firm grasp of his jaw,

and the blood to follow,
gritty with satisfaction.

* * *

A Box of Memories

A thousand memories waited
in the summer heat of the silent garage,
to hurl themselves at the witness
who would finally slide the door
heavenward and peer inside.

The memories wanted known.
They wanted spontaneous spiritual
conversions in the city,
based on their raw stories
held in bitter, bent photographs
under the tired plastic of family
albums.

However, when the day came,
finally, after tangled vines
had merged themselves with window
panes and strangled out what little
light entered the place,

and a man lifted the door,
the memories found no voice
though they strained and strained
and reached out to the stranger,

and hearing nothing but his own
doubts, the man lifted a box
from the corner and carried
it out to his car, and sat behind
the wheel, and cried.

* * *

Piano Sonata, #14

In the morning, as we wait
for the toaster to exhale, I beg
you to remember the moonlight.

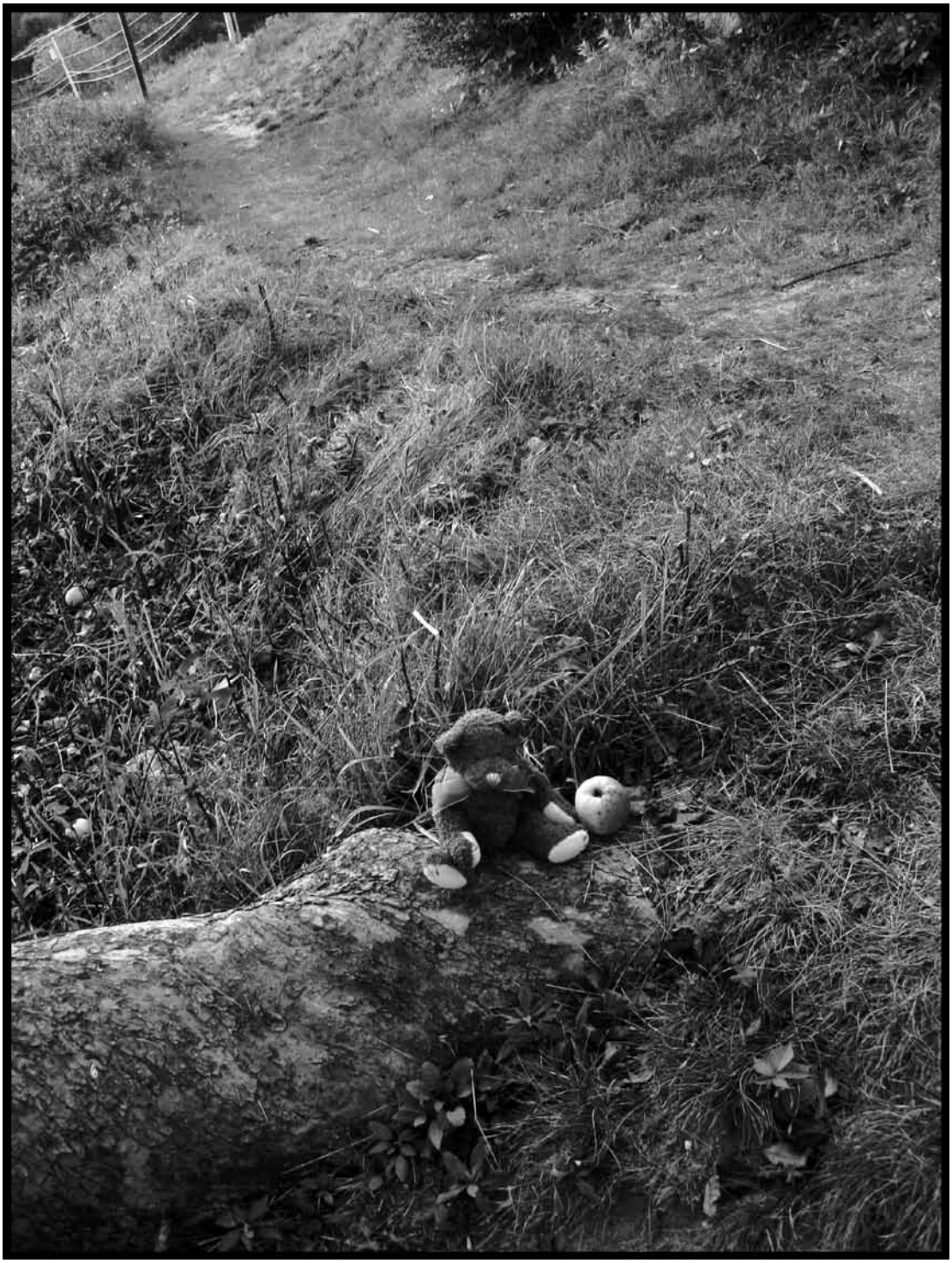
Each magnificent sound and pause,
a quilted square of pain and beauty,
purchased with blood diamonds.

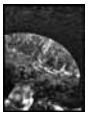
Imagine the composer, blind,
brushing rubber cement on the keys.
These notes stick with you the way good
country food sticks to your bones, and
woman, your soul is getting thin.

Put some butter on that knife. Later,
okay, saxophone; that specific touch,
that moan; for now, leave all that jazz
alone. In the haunting fog and mist,
let yourself be passionately kissed
by a master.

Sit down here, listen. The sun
will be up soon, and all the noisy influence.
This is the quiet hour, before you burn
like a rocket. I've brought Beethoven
to breakfast, with the sky in his pocket.

* * * * * *



Raymond Soulard, Jr. 

Many Musics

Eleventh Series

"Myriad lives like blades of grass,
yet to be realized,
bow as they pass."
—The Shins, "For Those to Come," 2003.

xxiv. Let the Rest Go (The King)

"So this is purgatory.
The memory set in mold.
Reality a little way past reach."
—Rod McKuen, "The Stanyon Cafe," 1984.

"Love it all, my King. Let the rest go."
These her last words, my beloved Deirdre,
as our last moment faded on my ship.
None of Asoyadonna's dream herb left.
Wouldn't matter. *You're gone.*

And soon my Brothers too. Now some sleeping
with drink-sodden smiles on them, others
pushing the carouse on deck awhile longer.

I looked upon each of your faces in
a new & old way tonight. Remembering
what we were along our way here.
Wishing it wasn't our last adventure.

"Love it all, my King. Let the rest go."
Your turquoise eyes staining me anew.
Your message to me that one will come
to me that is why I've come. *Why all this.*
And another I may grow old by?

This voyage become a maelstrom in my chamber.
You my second night's visitor.
Expected, unlike the first night's.

I knew they were unsure, sober,
frail in feeling at this setting off
for where we'd always been bound.

Of them, only Roddy showed much esprit
 when I arrived to the boat's loading.
His slumped form of recent times, dark
 sleepless eyes, replaced by a man
urging all with a laugh & a swagger.

But quiet, the rest of them, polite, distant,
 not Brothers, shared skin, shared blood,
more because *together, always together.*
 One after the next retiring early, hands
by their sides, eyes elsewhere.

I took to my chamber too, & lay abed long
 hours. Wishing I had some mushroom tea
to bring me to my wonderful friend
 in the sky. Could wishing make it so?
Eyes closed, a low *hmmm* burbling from
 my lips, almost despairingly.

Somehow, a miracle? Sharp ears? I felt
 myself rising like old through that
narrow aperture in my ceiling, & up,
 & up, & up! I held out my arms smiling,
just hoping I'd careen myself upon
 that shiny-scaled great green head,
land, grab on! Hold tightly!

It was so, but it was other. We flew
 purposely, no play, little joy in it.
Eventually my night eyes made out
 the Island ahead, what my own ship
was days away from.

My friend swooped us over its Wooded
 scape for a few lingering moments,
reluctant to arrive where bound.
 Who could thrall this Dream Dragon
vision so? Toward whom?

We soared straight then to our
 obscure destination, lower & lower to it,
& of a sudden it was what the long ago
 visions had shown me. A massive,
ancient, entrance. *The Tangled Gate.*
 Swooped through it, great enough to
clear my friend's beautiful endless wings.

Does he grow smaller? Do I with him?
We swoop down paths marked by tall
walls of vines & stones, left, right,
right, left, a seeming endless & dizzying
sequence. Straight unto where I've
always been coming. Cave of the Beast.

My dear friend slides me with a kind
of skid & gentle flip to the entrance, land
upright & walking. Night's pitch from
the outside but, within, not.

A soft glow. A sense of someone
unseen. A waiting. I speak.

"Why am I brought here by my friend
like this?"
Silence. A voice, more a growl in my mind,
speaks.

"You've come here for my help."
"Yes."
"To save the world from men?"
"Yes."
"And what would you give for this?"
"*What do I have left to give?*"
Silence.
"They'll get you here. They'll roam this
Island with you until you eventually
come here."
"Yes. They will."
"And that will be all."
"All?"
"Yes."
"All?"
"Love them all, King. Let the rest go."
"And then?"
"And then go."
"Go?"
"Yes."
Silence.
"This will save the world?"
Silence. This Cave is now empty, its soft
light fading. I make to leave & find
my friend, feel his Creaturely warmth
at least for a short while more, but
the dream ends with a sudden snap.

The second day breaks into beauty
 as I watch it moment by moment.
I hear shouts & calls on the deck,
 delight in their tones. Open water.
Salve to the bite & snag of land.

I watch everything this day. Delight
 at Roddy & Odom riding dolphins, &
then failing too. Odom's smile how
 it's rarely been in months. Calling
bright-eyed to me on deck as never
 so long.

I spy on Francisco as he stalks
 around his painting, throwing off
his artist's cap & cloak. Seeming to faint
 by his own intensity. Looks up at me
like my eyes alone upon his breaks
 his heart, twice over.

But by evening he & the rest are in
 great moods, we six eating together
under the scirocco of stars, drinking
 each his fill & more. I tell the
old riddle I know there is no answer
 to, but two questions. *Why desire?*
Why anything at all?

When Asoyadonna follows me to my cabin,
 presents me with the gift she'd brought
for me, I almost tell her *no,*
 I've dreamed the future already,
it ends badly.

But to see you one more time again,
 my Deirdre, I weaken, acquiesce.
You lay with me in my bed, one you
 never saw. Atwist in my grasp, like old,
fingers playing my graying beard like
 your own secret, amusing instrument.

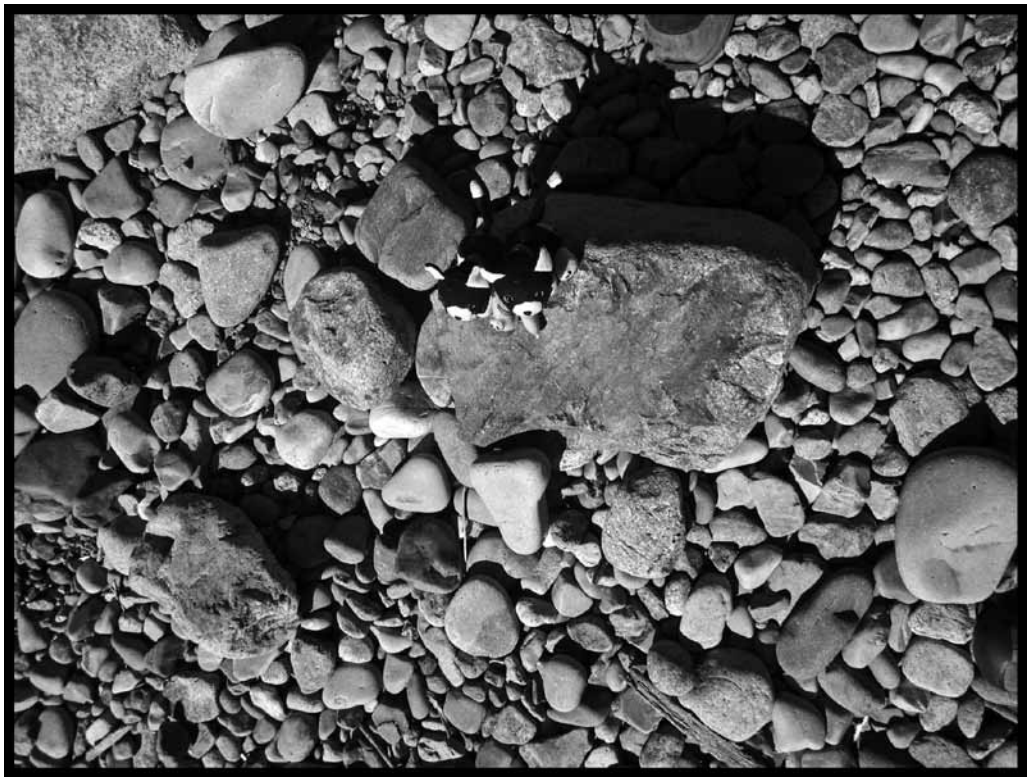
I wonder if one can ask one vision
 about another, the politics & etiquette
of the aether. But you know. Your message
 tells me the rest. *She will come.*
She will matter. She is all.

"You were all," I say aloud.
I feel her smiling, need not see her eyes.
"We saved each other."
She repeats the Beast's rending
instructions, & is melted back into
me by dawn. My dearest stain.

"Land! It's land!" I hear
Dreamwalker's voice, a joy practically
savage in it.

Nothing left to do but give them all
this hour, this happy day.
Love them all. Save the world.

* * * * * *



Ace Boggess

Spirit Cries Out for More

Hard wine covers of a book, doors of a room
where—should thousands enter,
measure their lives—I would be alone:

the wandering avatar guides himself toward calm.
I'm reading *Soul Mountain*, Gao Xingjian's
novel that just won him the *Nobel Prize*.

It's not yet clear if the mountain called Lingshan
exists as more than myth, idea, metaphor
for the hermit-pilgrim's inward reach.

The road winds through memory, explores night,
digs into the muck-soul of the universe
in search of something I hope to feel

in my palm when the author does:
narrator of all consciousness. The reading
is hard like an unpaved highway, & chapters

go on for centuries like stones for graves.
I keep a finger poised to turn corners,
thumb extended summoning taxicabs from heaven:

how alone I am here, trapped as crowds
gather around me like parentheses. Pages
withdraw, withdraw into the forests of their birth.

* * *

Healing Is Likely

Storm winds on a sunny day,
a house empty, round lids from
trash cans tossed across the road.

There's an angry cat, its gray-
blue fur on end twice over.
I almost hear him hiss

at God. The sky has grown
more sky-blue. No rain-waves
cover the cream-tea creek.

Water has cleared, made room
for the unseen in its limited
depths. No place to go,

no finish for the present:
a pause to reflect on scars
where once were wounds.

* * *

Think Twice Before Promising Silence

Even to dream, I must have them:
words that return like ritual comets of distraction
beneath the black-haze sky canopy night wears.

Words that make sense of senseless apparitions,
images betrayed by sleep—I collect as if miles
benignly registered on the soul's odometer.

Curve of a woman's neck, chin, shoulders,
breasts that imagine wars, become legendary—
they lose their beauty without the tongue
defining them, while love, a scholar's word,
means nothing left unsaid.

* * *

Tender, Romantic Touch Later Tonight

I think it means wind on my face,
& rain, after so many hot August nights
where not even darkness cooled skin,

gave pause to anger sunlight baked into
a skull. It's the angelic caress of a leaf forming
the cross in moisture on my brow. Inside,

the first cat meets me at the door,
rubs against my legs as if to say, *You're loved*,
though having lost the language of men.

Erin, too, comes all the way from her bedroom
to greet me with a kiss as if I've been gone ten years,
lost at sea with my arrogance. Her lips are soft like

a naked orange. I taste them, say to myself,
If anything, it's this. Next, my ear touches
cold pillow cloth. I lean into a second darkness

without a single thought, freed from reason's
midnight chains. When nothing's left to think,
no beliefs will guide—I know all that it means,
& lack so much as a lone breath to respond.

* * *

Cheerful Morning Helps Fade the Blues

Wake up to love's blurred face, sleeping,
alive in dreams—they cling to her skin like roses,
scent & color. I think I can smell the sex on her.

Not like nightmarish tremors that leave her
abuzz in Methodist fervor, or those dreams
where tears are doubly real on the inside.

It's rare nights when she takes a lover, feels things
she could never speak in daylight—private,
too silent for a language without proper words.

She breathes only in sighs as if she wears
genitalia in her lungs, exacting eruptions of wind
over long, desperate dryness—timid, benign.

I hear his name in tensing flutter her lips yield:
a whisper. I don't, couldn't possibly know the man,
what he does to move her past fatigue.

I smile, lower my head, pretend I'm the
wondrous stranger she believes. It can't be me.
I'm like gray space between the dark & dawn.

Whilst she holds fire as though night never
touches her, she masks awakening in outer calm.
To open her eyes she'd burn a hole in the sun.

* * *

Take the Plunge into Life

Blink to clear away the dust, then see:
things are happening now, tomorrow,
ten minutes ago. You wait among them,

happening too at your comparable pace.
First frost readies to coax its fee from
a hard ground. Night arm-wrestles day,

wins, loses, prepares to win again
as stars mock the sun with patterns.
You linger, so alive & far from living,

afraid of what you witness through
awareness, its unbending lens. Go on,
fall. It's easy enough with gravity,

a quick lean left or right. Sure, you'll
bump your head a time or two, but blood
clears away, leaves scars to map progress,

show you've wandered glittering highways
of self, crossed the line where animal ends,
animate light shines from human eyes.

* * * * * *

Nathan D. Horowitz

Snake-head Soup

[Travel Journal]

Dave's alarm rang at 2:55 a.m. He, Mark, Ryder, and I picked ourselves up from the sleeping platform, pissed in the forest behind the provisional hut and, quiet and sleepy, assembled a row of low stools in front of the hut. The brew we'd made with the leaves of the vine—the heads of the yagé serpent, Joaquín had said—was still warm. We dipped gourds into it and began to swig it down. It was much more watery than ordinary yagé, not unpleasant at all.

Soon we began to throw it up into the shallow ditch that kept water from getting into the hut when it rained. This, also, was not uncomfortable. Then we drank more.

Between our hands, in the liquid in the gourds, the reflections of our faces were dark against the pale sky.

Almost without speaking, we drank and puked again and again for fifty-five minutes.

Just a bit was left in the pot when Joaquín came over, and we each drank a last gourdful without vomiting it up. Joaquín had a gourdful too.

I sat in the hut, on the sleeping platform, near the fire, next to Joaquín, my head in my hands.

* * *

The intoxication comes on slowly. I lie back on the sleeping platform and sink into my vision. A serpent with a green dragon head is slithering around inside my torso, eating a dark, sticky substance. She's fierce, loving, protective.

I go to my foam sleeping mat, burrito myself in a blanket, fall asleep.

In a dream, here in the provisional hut in the nighttime, I open a hammock, but there's a huge glowing silver and gold spider web there; I don't sit in it.

Dave says something and I awaken. It's dawn. Maribel's roosters are crowing, muffled because they're in the coop. I get up and move the stone and the board, setting all the chickens free. Clucking, they rush out like a feathery river, spread out, hunt for bugs and seeds. When I come back, Dave says, "Nate, will you please sing something Jewish?" I sing a song I know, just the words *shalom aleichem,* peace be with you, set to a simple tune. It touches him; he bursts out crying. We keep this up, I singing, him weeping.

We stop when we notice chickens sneaking toward the kitchen area, trying to raid our dry goods. Chasing them away, I become ferocious, roaring, "***I feel extremely caustic today!***" as I stagger around waving a stick at them. The chickens are characteristically unimpressed as they keep out of my way. Soon, I'm on the bluff overlooking the river, vomiting into plants—a scaly green sea serpent whirling and uncoiling kaleidoscopically through the tears in my eyes—and I shout at the blissful world, "***Drunk on green! Get the picture?"***

Feeling new and bright, and suddenly calm, I'm in Eden at the beginning of time. I remember the story about Adam naming the animals as they go by, saying things like, "You look like a 'lion,' so I will call you Lion." In his red tunic, on his way to the bushes, Mark walks into that name: I dub him *Ari*, Hebrew for lion. I trip back to the hut, muttering, "Get the picture," intending to take whirling, blurred photos of plants. In the forty-year-old green duffel bag left over from my step-dad's army days,

I rummage for my camera. But all I find besides clothes is a large white plastic bottle of multivitamins, which I bring out, muttering "Don't give them to the Indians," which my mother said when she gave them to me.

Behind me, Joaquín's voice says, *"¡Toanké! ¡Sentando hamaca!"* Sitting down hammock! When I turn, I see him grinning his gap-toothed, Cheshire jaguar grin. "¡*Cantando canción al oyo watí!"* he says. Singing a song to the bat spirit! Joaquín's encouraging me not to make a fool of myself by dancing round with a bottle of multivitamins, and needling me for the bat vision I had last year.

"The bat spirit worthless," he said back then.

"Why?" I said.

"Knowing only low things. Not having the power to heal. But the *wiñawai*, those are good people." Yes, the hamster-sized multicolored sky people with crowns who dragged my left foot into Heaven after I puked up my sin with my hooker.

But how could I not also love the bat spirit, that frightening, enlightening friend?

I stow the bottle of multivitamins back in the duffel bag and zoom toward an empty hammock, staggering like a bat in flight. I lie back and, to bug Joaquín, sing, *"Oyo watí, oyo watí, a-mi-gui-to oyo watí . . ."* I remember the black face with glossy eyes, leaf-shaped nose, ivory fangs. I grin his grin—that's the first word in their body language, and it means "hello"—and I fall silent, as you would have done in my place.

And I goggle my eyes—*our* eyes, since, as Whitman wrote, "every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you"—and I bare my fangs—*our* fangs—Whitman's, mine, the bat spirit's, and yours. Everyone's fangs. We all stare, wide-eyed, through the side of the hammock at the swaying world—out-of-focus patterns of forest leaves overlain by the out-of-focus weave of the cotton strings.

Mark strides into the hut, scowling. His voice trembles with anger. "That Pasiona! She tried to put her shit on me!"

I burst out laughing at the thought of the skinny yellow dog attacking him with a turd. He glances at me, then at Dave.

"I'm serious. You know she's sick with something. When I was out there takin' a crap, she snuck up behind me. When I turned around, I saw her *starin'* at me, tryin' to put whatever she has into me. *Damn* that dog!"

"I'm a hundred percent sure you'll be OK if you sing with us for a while," purrs Dave, his dark eyes wide and serious.

"You may be right," Mark says, and settles into a hammock.

The air shimmers with insect song. Inspired by the snake-head soup, we chant hiero-melodio neo-archaic glossolalic canticles lit with sunlight that ripples among us like wind and water.

Ryder scats, *Io io, eco eo. Pico pico, weyo weyo. Hoka hoka, heyo heyo. What'll you do 'til mocha mayo? What do you want me to say-o, say-o?*

Dave and I intone, *One love is high, one love is high, one love is high . . .*

During a lull, I notice my back hurts. I wonder out loud, "Who can beat up this snake in my spine?"

"What," says Ryder, "do you mean?"

"Back pain. Need someone to punch my *latissimus dorsi* to shake the energy free."

Ryder hobbles over on his injured foot, which is nearly healed now. The blacksmith joins me in the hammock and punches me as indicated until I feel better. Then, staring at the forest, he mutters, grinning, "It's like a freakin' movie out there!"

"A freakin' movie," I confirm.

He says, "Do you know when we can have some water?"

I say, "You can have some now, if you want."

"It's like my dad used to say," he says. I can see every detail of the white/pink/blue/black mandala of his right eye. "I'd rather have a battle in front of me than a neon phlebotomy."

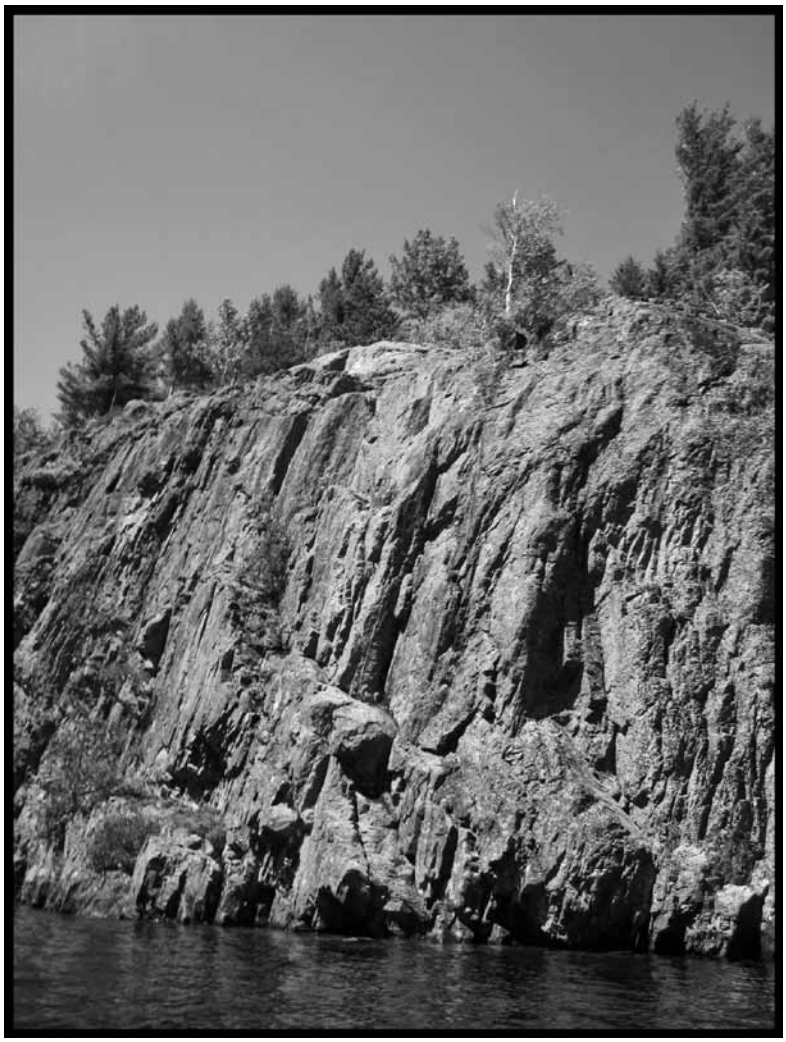
"Yup," I say, studying the shapes in his blue iris. One looks like a giraffe.
"Did that come out right?" he says. "What the hell did I just say?"
"I have no idea."

* * *

We spent most of the day in the provisional hut, feeling the sun move across the sky, gradually coming down.

Now there's an evening concert of insects, frogs, birds, and a distant chainsaw or two. A woodpecker knocks on a tree. Who's there?

* * * * * *



My First 500 Books

My first 500 books were printed on smoke.
My 500 identical twins all died before conception.

But enough about me. Let's talk about you.

Who were you before your parents met?
What is the weight of your youngest dog?
When was the last time you gave a fuck?
Will the Royals win the World Series next year?

I feel there's so much you could tell me.
Are green lions thirstier than red ones?
Is pork fit for human consumption?
How do the Swiss make holes in cheese?

Please don't answer immediately.
You're so beautiful with your mouth closed.

And one day, not today,
I may truly need to know.

* * *

Evelyn's Bookshelves

My friend Evelyn lives in Vienna in a three-story post-war apartment building with high ceilings. "Spiral ceilings," I nearly wrote. Her bookshelves rise forever.

Quirky thing about her and the flat. Outwardly normal, both of them. She's a poet and translator, divides her time between Vienna and Saint Ives, Cornwall, in England. Parents were Jews who survived the Holocaust. Father owned a clothing store in the First District. He favored Evelyn's older sister, and beat Evelyn for having seizures—she was epileptic.

Bookish and bright, she ran away to England when she was sixteen. Met Samuel Beckett in a coffee shop. When he learned she wanted to be a writer, he took her out and bought her a green dress, which she still has, hanging in her closet.

The effect of the bookshelves I noted one day when I visited. But more back-story is needed. You'll understand why later, unless you don't.

Her first love OD'd on heroin and died next to her in a Midlands field. Next day she jumped out a fourth story window and woke up in hospital.

She married a British engineer and lived half a year in Beirut. One day, a local politician was shot dead as he stood chatting with her at the breakfast bar of the Holiday Inn. She had a nervous breakdown and was given electroshock treatments that, while horrible, eventually achieved their result. Later, she found success working as a clown in Jerusalem.

All during these years and beyond, she wrote. I met her in 2001 at our English language poetry group in Vienna.

The day I visited her, I think it was that she stepped out of the room for coffee and cake and forgot to maintain the illusion. I was admiring a little bronze statue of a crouching figure by an English sculptor she knew. I glanced up and saw that the ceiling was gone. The bookshelves went up and up, like the inside of an elevator shaft.

In a flash of intuition, I saw that, through an act of will, one could rise up among the shelves, weightless, and peruse the titles of the lowest library of Heaven, books which humans are ordinarily not allowed to read, but which Evelyn was permitted to browse any time she wished, as long as she agreed to keep the matter a secret.

* * * * * *

Colin James

The Fun Lover's Epicurean Paradox

A smell like those German
leather short-shorts below
corny fedora feathered hats,
emanating in a northern-southerly direction.

The roads had been closed for weeks.

Never ending rumors implied sanctuary
could still be achieved yet
similar to a comfortable utopia,
treeless and somehow video simulated.

Clever solar conglomerates penny wise
advertising in modern hair shirts.

The weak and dying boring as ever
displaying their lack of composure
at designated death rest areas.

My knees were so swollen
they looked like padded arms.
I paused every other step.

Quitters returning, passing us opposite,
were contemptuously ravished for
their insensitive points of view,
or dour descriptions of Lands End as
not significantly better than Brighton.

* * *

Peculiarities Attributed to Epicurus

When I am being watched
my unibrow twitches,
like an outrageous snake,
then my head spins clockwise.

Balance is never compromised,
eyes scan pertinent formations
like shapes behind boulders
and torsos in trees.

Underspan clingers whose
specialties are bridges
may still fool the fatalists,
reflect themselves in the water.

All respectfully respond
to my *la la la la* tongue.

* * *

Curse of the Orange Pompadour

Greetings, Prisoner 50000001.

It is with the greatest pleasure
that I make you aware of
winning our prison lottery.

Please proceed with chaperones
to the ornate teller kiosk.

Lights as always lit
flashing like a shit-eating grin,
in the ways of him our warden.

Many millions worth of success
purchased at this very spot.

The friendly fiefdom's
heavy made-up cashier
barks orders that seem mostly
retrospectively immured.

Credit will get you bowlegged,
not as common since they routinely
break the ankles at birth. You may
have uninhibited use of the library,
the wall murals not nearly complete,
sketched, or even a reasonable first attempt.

* * * * * *

Flannery O'Connor

A Good Man is Hard to Find

[Classic Fiction]

The Grandmother didn't want to go to Florida. She wanted to visit some of her connections in east Tennessee and she was seizing at every chance to change Bailey's mind. Bailey was the son she lived with, her only boy. He was sitting on the edge of his chair at the table, bent over the orange sports section of the *Journal*. "Now look here, Bailey," she said, "see here, read this," and she stood with one hand on her thin hip and the other rattling the newspaper at his bald head. "Here this fellow that calls himself The Misfit is aloose from the Federal Pen and headed toward Florida and you read here what it says he did to these people. Just you read it. I wouldn't take my children in any direction with a criminal like that aloose in it. I couldn't answer to my conscience if I did."

Bailey didn't look up from his reading so she wheeled around then and faced the children's mother, a young woman in slacks, whose face was as broad and innocent as a cabbage and was tied around with a green head-kerchief that had two points on the top like rabbit's ears. She was sitting on the sofa, feeding the baby his apricots out of a jar. "The children have been to Florida before," the old lady said. "You all ought to take them somewhere else for a change so they would see different parts of the world and be broad. They never have been to east Tennessee."

The children's mother didn't seem to hear her but the eight-year-old boy, John Wesley, a stocky child with glasses, said, "If you don't want to go to Florida, why dontcha stay at home?" He and the little girl, June Star, were reading the funny papers on the floor.

"She wouldn't stay at home to be queen for a day," June Star said without raising her yellow head.

"Yes and what would you do if this fellow, The Misfit, caught you?" the grandmother asked.

"I'd smack his face," John Wesley said.

"She wouldn't stay at home for a million bucks," June Star said. "Afraid she'd miss something. She has to go everywhere we go."

"All right, Miss," the grandmother said. "Just remember that the next time you want me to curl your hair."

June Star said her hair was naturally curly.

The next morning the grandmother was the first one in the car, ready to go. She had her big black valise that looked like the head of a hippopotamus in one corner, and underneath it she was hiding a basket with Pitty Sing, the cat, in it. She didn't intend for the cat to be left alone in the house for three days because he would miss her too much and she was afraid he might brush against one of the gas burners and accidentally asphyxiate himself. Her son, Bailey, didn't like to arrive at a motel with a cat.

She sat in the middle of the back seat with John Wesley and June Star on either side of her. Bailey and the children's mother and the baby sat in front and they left Atlanta at eight forty-five with the mileage on the car at 55890. The grandmother wrote this down because she thought it would be interesting to say how many miles they had been when they got back. It took them twenty minutes to reach the outskirts of the city.

The old lady settled herself comfortably, removing her white cotton gloves and putting them up with her purse on the shelf in front of the back window. The children's mother still had on slacks and still had her head tied up in a green kerchief, but the grandmother had on a navy blue straw sailor hat with a bunch of white violets on the brim and a navy blue dress with a small white dot in the print. Her

collars and cuffs were white organdy trimmed with lace and at her neckline she had pinned a purple spray of cloth violets containing a sachet. In case of an accident, anyone seeing her dead on the highway would know at once that she was a lady.

She said she thought it was going to be a good day for driving, neither too hot nor too cold, and she cautioned Bailey that the speed limit was fifty-five miles an hour and that the patrolmen hid themselves behind billboards and small clumps of trees and sped out after you before you had a chance to slow down. She pointed out interesting details of the scenery: Stone Mountain; the blue granite that in some places came up to both sides of the highway; the brilliant red clay banks slightly streaked with purple; and the various crops that made rows of green lace-work on the ground. The trees were full of silver-white sunlight and the meanest of them sparkled. The children were reading comic magazines and their mother had gone back to sleep.

"Let's go through Georgia fast so we won't have to look at it much," John Wesley said.

"If I were a little boy," said the grandmother, "I wouldn't talk about my native state that way. Tennessee has the mountains and Georgia has the hills."

"Tennessee is just a hillbilly dumping ground," John Wesley said, "and Georgia is a lousy state too."

"You said it," June Star said.

"In my time," said the grandmother, folding her thin veined fingers, "children were more respectful of their native states and their parents and everything else. People did right then. Oh look at the cute little pickaninny!" she said and pointed to a Negro child standing in the door of a shack. "Wouldn't that make a picture, now?" she asked and they all turned and looked at the little Negro out of the back window. He waved.

"He didn't have any britches on," June Star said.

"He probably didn't have any," the grandmother explained. "Little niggers in the country don't have things like we do. If I could paint, I'd paint that picture," she said.

The children exchanged comic books.

The grandmother offered to hold the baby and the children's mother passed him over the front seat to her. She set him on her knee and bounced him and told him about the things they were passing. She rolled her eyes and screwed up her mouth and stuck her leathery thin face into his smooth bland one. Occasionally he gave her a faraway smile. They passed a large cotton field with five or six graves fenced in the middle of it, like a small island. "Look at the graveyard!" the grandmother said, pointing it out. "That was the old family burying ground. That belonged to the plantation."

"Where's the plantation?" John Wesley asked.

"Gone With the Wind," said the grandmother. "Ha. Ha."

When the children finished all the comic books they had brought, they opened the lunch and ate it. The grandmother ate a peanut butter sandwich and an olive and would not let the children throw the box and the paper napkins out the window. When there was nothing else to do they played a game by choosing a cloud and making the other two guess what shape it suggested. John Wesley took one the shape of a cow and June Star guessed a cow and John Wesley said, no, an automobile, and June Star said he didn't play fair, and they began to slap each other over the grandmother.

The grandmother said she would tell them a story if they would keep quiet. When she told a story, she rolled her eyes and waved her head and was very dramatic. She said once when she was a maiden lady she had been courted by a Mr. Edgar Atkins Teagarden from Jasper, Georgia. She said he was a very good-looking man and a gentleman and that he brought her a watermelon every Saturday afternoon with his initials cut in it, E. A. T. Well, one Saturday, she said, Mr. Teagarden brought the watermelon and there was nobody at home and he left it on the front porch and returned in his buggy to Jasper, but she never got the watermelon, she said, because a nigger boy ate it when he saw the initials, E. A. T.! This story tickled John Wesley's funny bone and he giggled and giggled but June Star didn't think it was any good. She said she wouldn't marry a man that just brought her a watermelon

on Saturday. The grandmother said she would have done well to marry Mr. Teagarden because he was a gentleman and had bought Coca-Cola stock when it first came out and that he had died only a few years ago, a very wealthy man.

They stopped at The Tower for barbecued sandwiches. The Tower was a part stucco and part wood filling station and dance hall set in a clearing outside of Timothy. A fat man named Red Sammy Butts ran it and there were signs stuck here and there on the building and for miles up and down the highway saying, TRY RED SAMMY'S FAMOUS BARBECUE. NONE LIKE FAMOUS RED SAMMY'S! RED SAM! THE FAT BOY WITH THE HAPPY LAUGH! A VETERAN! RED SAMMY'S YOUR MAN!

Red Sammy was lying on the bare ground outside The Tower with his head under a truck while a gray monkey about a foot high, chained to a small chinaberry tree, chattered nearby. The monkey sprang back into the tree and got on the highest limb as soon as he saw the children jump out of the car and run toward him.

Inside, The Tower was a long dark room with a counter at one end and tables at the other and dancing space in the middle. They all sat down at a board table next to the nickelodeon and Red Sam's wife, a tall burnt-brown woman with hair and eyes lighter than her skin, came and took their order. The children's mother put a dime in the machine and played "The Tennessee Waltz," and the grandmother said that tune always made her want to dance. She asked Bailey if he would like to dance but he only glared at her. He didn't have a naturally sunny disposition like she did and trips made him nervous. The grandmother's brown eyes were very bright. She swayed her head from side to side and pretended she was dancing in her chair. June Star said play something she could tap to so the children's mother put in another dime and played a fast number and June Star stepped out onto the dance floor and did her tap routine.

"Ain't she cute?" Red Sam's wife said, leaning over the counter. "Would you like to come be my little girl?"

"No I certainly wouldn't," June Star said. "I wouldn't live in a broken-down place like this for a million bucks!" and she ran back to the table.

"Ain't she cute?" the woman repeated, stretching her mouth politely.

"Aren't you ashamed?" hissed the grandmother.

Red Sam came in and told his wife to quit lounging on the counter and hurry up with these people's order. His khaki trousers reached just to his hip bones and his stomach hung over them like a sack of meal swaying under his shirt. He came over and sat down at a table nearby and let out a combination sigh and yodel. "You can't win," he said. "You can't win," and he wiped his sweating red face off with a gray handkerchief. "These days you don't know who to trust," he said. "Ain't that the truth?"

"People are certainly not nice like they used to be," said the grandmother.

"Two fellers come in here last week," Red Sammy said, "driving a Chrysler. It was a old beat-up car but it was a good one and these boys looked all right to me. Said they worked at the mill and you know I let them fellers charge the gas they bought? Now why did I do that?"

"Because you're a good man!" the grandmother said at once.

"Yes'm, I suppose so," Red Sam said as if he were struck with this answer.

His wife brought the orders, carrying the five plates all at once without a tray, two in each hand and one balanced on her arm. "It isn't a soul in this green world of God's that you can trust," she said. "And I don't count nobody out of that, not nobody," she repeated, looking at Red Sammy.

"Did you read about that criminal, The Misfit, that's escaped?" asked the grandmother.

"I wouldn't be a bit surprised if he didn't attack this place right here," said the woman. "If he hears about it being here, I wouldn't be none surprised to see him. If he hears it's two cent in the cash register, I wouldn't be a tall surprised if he . . ."

"That'll do," Red Sam said. "Go bring these people their Co'-Colas," and the woman went off to

get the rest of the order.

"A good man is hard to find," Red Sammy said. "Everything is getting terrible. I remember the day you could go off and leave your screen door unlatched. Not no more."

He and the grandmother discussed better times. The old lady said that in her opinion Europe was entirely to blame for the way things were now. She said the way Europe acted you would think we were made of money and Red Sam said it was no use talking about it, she was exactly right. The children ran outside into the white sunlight and looked at the monkey in the lacy chinaberry tree. He was busy catching fleas on himself and biting each one carefully between his teeth as if it were a delicacy.

They drove off again into the hot afternoon. The grandmother took cat naps and woke up every few minutes with her own snoring. Outside of Toombsboro she woke up and recalled an old plantation that she had visited in this neighborhood once when she was a young lady. She said the house had six white columns across the front and that there was an avenue of oaks leading up to it and two little wooden trellis arbors on either side in front where you sat down with your suitor after a stroll in the garden. She recalled exactly which road to turn off to get to it. She knew that Bailey would not be willing to lose any time looking at an old house, but the more she talked about it, the more she wanted to see it once again and find out if the little twin arbors were still standing. "There was a secret panel in this house," she said craftily, not telling the truth but wishing that she were, "and the story went that all the family silver was hidden in it when Sherman came through but it was never found . . ."

"Hey!" John Wesley said. "Let's go see it! We'll find it! We'll poke all the woodwork and find it! Who lives there? Where do you turn off at? Hey Pop, can't we turn off there?"

"We never have seen a house with a secret panel!" June Star shrieked. "Let's go to the house with the secret panel! Hey Pop, can't we go see the house with the secret panel!"

"It's not far from here, I know," the grandmother said. "It wouldn't take over twenty minutes."

Bailey was looking straight ahead. His jaw was as rigid as a horseshoe. "No," he said.

The children began to yell and scream that they wanted to see the house with the secret panel. John Wesley kicked the back of the front seat and June Star hung over her mother's shoulder and whined desperately into her ear that they never had any fun even on their vacation, that they could never do what THEY wanted to do. The baby began to scream and John Wesley kicked the back of the seat so hard that his father could feel the blows in his kidney.

"All right!" he shouted and drew the car to a stop at the side of the road. "Will you all shut up? Will you all just shut up for one second? If you don't shut up, we won't go anywhere."

"It would be very educational for them," the grandmother murmured.

"All right," Bailey said, "but get this: this is the only time we're going to stop for anything like this. This is the one and only time."

"The dirt road that you have to turn down is about a mile back," the grandmother directed. "I marked it when we passed."

"A dirt road," Bailey groaned.

After they had turned around and were headed toward the dirt road, the grandmother recalled other points about the house, the beautiful glass over the front doorway and the candle-lamp in the hall. John Wesley said that the secret panel was probably in the fireplace.

"You can't go inside this house," Bailey said. "You don't know who lives there."

"While you all talk to the people in front, I'll run around behind and get in a window," John Wesley suggested.

"We'll all stay in the car," his mother said. They turned onto the dirt road and the car raced roughly along in a swirl of pink dust. The grandmother recalled the times when there were no paved roads and thirty miles was a day's journey. The dirt road was hilly and there were sudden washes in it and sharp curves on dangerous embankments. All at once they would be on a hill, looking down over the blue tops of trees for miles around, then the next minute, they would be in a red depression with the dust-coated trees looking down on them.

"This place had better turn up in a minute," Bailey said, "or I'm going to turn around."

The road looked as if no one had traveled on it in months.

"It's not much farther," the grandmother said and just as she said it, a horrible thought came to her. The thought was so embarrassing that she turned red in the face and her eyes dilated and her feet jumped up, upsetting her valise in the corner. The instant the valise moved, the newspaper top she had over the basket under it rose with a snarl and Pitty Sing, the cat, sprang onto Bailey's shoulder.

The children were thrown to the floor and their mother, clutching the baby, was thrown out the door onto the ground; the old lady was thrown into the front seat. The car turned over once and landed right-side-up in a gulch off the side of the road. Bailey remained in the driver's seat with the cat—gray-striped with a broad white face and an orange nose—clinging to his neck like a caterpillar.

As soon as the children saw they could move their arms and legs, they scrambled out of the car, shouting, "We've had an ACCIDENT!" The grandmother was curled up under the dashboard, hoping she was injured so that Bailey's wrath would not come down on her all at once. The horrible thought she had had before the accident was that the house she had remembered so vividly was not in Georgia but in Tennessee.

Bailey removed the cat from his neck with both hands and flung it out the window against the side of a pine tree. Then he got out of the car and started looking for the children's mother. She was sitting against the side of the red gutted ditch, holding the screaming baby, but she only had a cut down her face and a broken shoulder. "We've had an ACCIDENT!" the children screamed in a frenzy of delight.

"But nobody's killed," June Star said with disappointment as the grandmother limped out of the car, her hat still pinned to her head but the broken front brim standing up at a jaunty angle and the violet spray hanging off the side. They all sat down in the ditch, except the children, to recover from the shock. They were all shaking.

"Maybe a car will come along," said the children's mother hoarsely.

"I believe I have injured an organ," said the grandmother, pressing her side, but no one answered her. Bailey's teeth were clattering. He had on a yellow sport shirt with bright blue parrots designed in it and his face was as yellow as the shirt. The grandmother decided that she would not mention that the house was in Tennessee.

The road was about ten feet above and they could see only the tops of the trees on the other side of it. Behind the ditch they were sitting in there were more woods, tall and dark and deep. In a few minutes they saw a car some distance away on top of a hill, coming slowly as if the occupants were watching them. The grandmother stood up and waved both arms dramatically to attract their attention. The car continued to come on slowly, disappeared around a bend and appeared again, moving even slower, on top of the hill they had gone over. It was a big black battered hearse-like automobile. There were three men in it.

It came to a stop just over them and for some minutes, the driver looked down with a steady expressionless gaze to where they were sitting, and didn't speak. Then he turned his head and muttered something to the other two and they got out. One was a fat boy in black trousers and a red sweat shirt with a silver stallion embossed on the front of it. He moved around on the right side of them and stood staring, his mouth partly open in a kind of loose grin. The other had on khaki pants and a blue striped coat and a gray hat pulled down very low, hiding most of his face. He came around slowly on the left side. Neither spoke.

The driver got out of the car and stood by the side of it, looking down at them. He was an older man than the other two. His hair was just beginning to gray and he wore silver-rimmed spectacles that gave him a scholarly look. He had a long creased face and didn't have on any shirt or undershirt. He had on blue jeans that were too tight for him and was holding a black hat and a gun. The two boys also had guns.

"We've had an ACCIDENT!" the children screamed.

The grandmother had the peculiar feeling that the bespectacled man was someone she knew. His face was as familiar to her as if she had known him all her life but she could not recall who he was. He moved away from the car and began to come down the embankment, placing his feet carefully so that he wouldn't slip. He had on tan and white shoes and no socks, and his ankles were red and thin. "Good afternoon," he said. "I see you all had you a little spill."

"We turned over twice!" said the grandmother.

"Oncet," he corrected. "We seen it happen. Try their car and see will it run, Hiram," he said quietly to the boy with the gray hat.

"What you got that gun for?" John Wesley asked. "Whatcha gonna do with that gun?"

"Lady," the man said to the children's mother, "would you mind calling them children to sit down by you? Children make me nervous. I want all you all to sit down right together there where you're at."

"What are you telling US what to do for?" June Star asked.

Behind them the line of woods gaped like a dark open mouth. "Come here," said their mother.

"Look here now," Bailey began suddenly, "we're in a predicament! We're in . . ."

The grandmother shrieked. She scrambled to her feet and stood staring. "You're The Misfit!" she said. "I recognized you at once!"

"Yes'm," the man said, smiling slightly as if he were pleased in spite of himself to be known, "but it would have been better for all of you, lady, if you hadn't of reckernized me."

Bailey turned his head sharply and said something to his mother that shocked even the children. The old lady began to cry and The Misfit reddened.

"Lady," he said, "don't you get upset. Sometimes a man says things he don't mean. I don't reckon he meant to talk to you thataway."

"You wouldn't shoot a lady, would you?" the grandmother said and removed a clean handkerchief from her cuff and began to slap at her eyes with it.

The Misfit pointed the toe of his shoe into the ground and made a little hole and then covered it up again. "I would hate to have to," he said.

"Listen," the grandmother almost screamed, "I know you're a good man. You don't look a bit like you have common blood. I know you must come from nice people!"

"Yes mam," he said, "finest people in the world." When he smiled he showed a row of strong white teeth. "God never made a finer woman than my mother and my daddy's heart was pure gold," he said. The boy with the red sweatshirt had come around behind them and was standing with his gun at his hip. The Misfit squatted down on the ground. "Watch them children, Bobby Lee," he said. "You know they make me nervous." He looked at the six of them huddled together in front of him and he seemed to be embarrassed as if he couldn't think of anything to say. "Ain't a cloud in the sky," he remarked, looking up at it. "Don't see no sun but don't see no cloud neither."

"Yes, it's a beautiful day," said the grandmother. "Listen," she said, "you shouldn't call yourself The Misfit because I know you're a good man at heart. I can just look at you and tell."

"Hush!" Bailey yelled. "Hush! Everybody shut up and let me handle this!" He was squatting in the position of a runner about to sprint forward but he didn't move.

"I pre-chate that, lady," The Misfit said and drew a little circle in the ground with the butt of his gun.

"It'll take a half a hour to fix this here car," Hiram called, looking over the raised hood of it.

"Well, first you and Bobby Lee get him and that little boy to step over yonder with you," The Misfit said, pointing to Bailey and John Wesley. "The boys want to ast you something," he said to Bailey. "Would you mind stepping back in them woods there with them?"

"Listen," Bailey began, "we're in a terrible predicament! Nobody realizes what this is," and his voice cracked. His eyes were as blue and intense as the parrots in his shirt and he remained perfectly still.

The grandmother reached up to adjust her hat brim as if she were going to the woods with him but it came off in her hand. She stood staring at it and after a second she let it fall on the ground. Hiram pulled Bailey up by the arm as if he were assisting an old man. John Wesley caught hold of his father's hand and Bobby Lee followed. They went off toward the woods and just as they reached the dark edge, Bailey turned and supporting himself against a gray naked pine trunk, he shouted, "I'll be back in a minute, Mamma, wait on me!"

"Come back this instant!" his mother shrilled but they all disappeared into the woods.

"Bailey Boy!" the grandmother called in a tragic voice but she found she was looking at The Misfit squatting on the ground in front of her. "I just know you're a good man," she said desperately. "You're not a bit common!"

"Nome, I ain't a good man," The Misfit said after a second as if he had considered her statement carefully, "but I ain't the worst in the world neither. My daddy said I was a different breed of dog from my brothers and sisters. 'You know,' Daddy said, 'it's some that can live their whole life out without asking about it and it's others has to know why it is, and this boy is one of the latters. He's going to be into everything!'" He put on his black hat and looked up suddenly and then away deep into the woods as if he were embarrassed again. "I'm sorry I don't have on a shirt before you ladies," he said, hunching his shoulders slightly. "We buried our clothes that we had on when we escaped and we're just making do until we can get better. We borrowed these from some folks we met," he explained.

"That's perfectly all right," the grandmother said. "Maybe Bailey has an extra shirt in his suitcase."

"I'll look and see terrectly," The Misfit said.

"Where are they taking him?" the children's mother screamed.

"Daddy was a card himself," The Misfit said. "You couldn't put anything over on him. He never got in trouble with the Authorities though. Just had the knack of handling them."

"You could be honest too if you'd only try," said the grandmother. "Think how wonderful it would be to settle down and live a comfortable life and not have to think about somebody chasing you all the time."

The Misfit kept scratching in the ground with the butt of his gun as if he were thinking about it. "Yes'm, somebody is always after you," he murmured.

The grandmother noticed how thin his shoulder blades were just behind his hat because she was standing up looking down on him. "Do you ever pray?" she asked.

He shook his head. All she saw was the black hat wiggle between his shoulder blades. "Nome," he said.

There was a pistol shot from the woods, followed closely by another. Then silence. The old lady's head jerked around. She could hear the wind move through the treetops like a long satisfied insuck of breath. "Bailey Boy!" she called.

"I was a gospel singer for a while," The Misfit said. "I been most everything. Been in the arm service, both land and sea, at home and abroad, been twict married, been an undertaker, been with the railroads, plowed Mother Earth, been in a tornado, seen a man burnt alive oncet," and he looked up at the children's mother and the little girl who were sitting close together, their faces white and their eyes glassy; "I even seen a woman flogged," he said.

"Pray, pray," the grandmother began, "pray, pray . . ."

"I never was a bad boy that I remember of," The Misfit said in an almost dreamy voice, "but somewheres along the line I done something wrong and got sent to the penitentiary. I was buried alive," and he looked up and held her attention to him by a steady stare.

"That's when you should have started to pray," she said "What did you do to get sent to the penitentiary that first time?"

"Turn to the right, it was a wall," The Misfit said, looking up again at the cloudless sky. "Turn to the left, it was a wall. Look up it was a ceiling, look down it was a floor. I forget what I done, lady. I set there and set there, trying to remember what it was I done and I ain't recalled it to this day. Oncet in a

while, I would think it was coming to me, but it never come."

"Maybe they put you in by mistake," the old lady said vaguely.

"Nome," he said. "It wasn't no mistake. They had the papers on me."

"You must have stolen something," she said.

The Misfit sneered slightly. "Nobody had nothing I wanted," he said. "It was a head-doctor at the penitentiary said what I had done was kill my daddy but I known that for a lie. My daddy died in nineteen ought nineteen of the epidemic flu and I never had a thing to do with it. He was buried in the Mount Hopewell Baptist churchyard and you can go there and see for yourself."

"If you would pray," the old lady said, "Jesus would help you."

"That's right," The Misfit said.

"Well then, why don't you pray?" she asked trembling with delight suddenly.

"I don't want no help," he said. "I'm doing all right by myself."

Bobby Lee and Hiram came ambling back from the woods. Bobby Lee was dragging a yellow shirt with bright blue parrots in it.

"Throw me that shirt, Bobby Lee," The Misfit said. The shirt came flying at him and landed on his shoulder and he put it on. The grandmother couldn't name what the shirt reminded her of. "No, lady," The Misfit said while he was buttoning it up, "I found out the crime don't matter. You can do one thing or you can do another, kill a man or take a tire off his car, because sooner or later you're going to forget what it was you done and just be punished for it."

The children's mother had begun to make heaving noises as if she couldn't get her breath. "Lady," he asked, "would you and that little girl like to step off yonder with Bobby Lee and Hiram and join your husband?"

"Yes, thank you," the mother said faintly. Her left arm dangled helplessly and she was holding the baby, who had gone to sleep, in the other. "Hep that lady up, Hiram," The Misfit said as she struggled to climb out of the ditch, "and Bobby Lee, you hold onto that little girl's hand."

"I don't want to hold hands with him," June Star said. "He reminds me of a pig."

The fat boy blushed and laughed and caught her by the arm and pulled her off into the woods after Hiram and her mother.

Alone with The Misfit, the grandmother found that she had lost her voice. There was not a cloud in the sky nor any sun. There was nothing around her but woods. She wanted to tell him that he must pray. She opened and closed her mouth several times before anything came out. Finally she found herself saying, "Jesus, Jesus," meaning, Jesus will help you, but the way she was saying it, it sounded as if she might be cursing.

"Yes'm," The Misfit said as if he agreed. "Jesus thrown everything off balance. It was the same case with Him as with me except He hadn't committed any crime and they could prove I had committed one because they had the papers on me. Of course," he said, "they never shown me my papers. That's why I sign myself now. I said long ago, you get you a signature and sign everything you do and keep a copy of it. Then you'll know what you done and you can hold up the crime to the punishment and see do they match and in the end you'll have something to prove you ain't been treated right. I call myself The Misfit," he said, "because I can't make what all I done wrong fit what all I gone through in punishment."

There was a piercing scream from the woods, followed closely by a pistol report. "Does it seem right to you, lady, that one is punished a heap and another ain't punished at all?"

"Jesus!" the old lady cried. "You've got good blood! I know you wouldn't shoot a lady! I know you come from nice people! Pray! Jesus, you ought not to shoot a lady. I'll give you all the money I've got!"

"Lady," The Misfit said, looking beyond her far into the woods, "there never was a body that give the undertaker a tip."

There were two more pistol reports and the grandmother raised her head like a parched old turkey hen crying for water and called, "Bailey Boy, Bailey Boy!" as if her heart would break.

"Jesus was the only One that ever raised the dead," The Misfit continued, "and He shouldn't have done it. He thrown everything off balance. If He did what He said, then it's nothing for you to do but throw away everything and follow Him, and if He didn't, then it's nothing for you to do but enjoy the few minutes you got left the best way you can—by killing somebody or burning down his house or doing some other meanness to him. No pleasure but meanness," he said and his voice had become almost a snarl.

"Maybe He didn't raise the dead," the old lady mumbled, not knowing what she was saying and feeling so dizzy that she sank down in the ditch with her legs twisted under her.

"I wasn't there so I can't say He didn't," The Misfit said. "I wisht I had of been there," he said, hitting the ground with his fist. "It ain't right I wasn't there because if I had of been there I would of known. Listen lady," he said in a high voice, "if I had of been there I would of known and I wouldn't be like I am now." His voice seemed about to crack and the grandmother's head cleared for an instant. She saw the man's face twisted close to her own as if he were going to cry and she murmured, "Why you're one of my babies. You're one of my own children!" She reached out and touched him on the shoulder. The Misfit sprang back as if a snake had bitten him and shot her three times through the chest. Then he put his gun down on the ground and took off his glasses and began to clean them.

Hiram and Bobby Lee returned from the woods and stood over the ditch, looking down at the grandmother who half sat and half lay in a puddle of blood with her legs crossed under her like a child's and her face smiling up at the cloudless sky.

Without his glasses, The Misfit's eyes were red-rimmed and pale and defenseless-looking. "Take her off and throw her where you thrown the others," he said, picking up the cat that was rubbing itself against his leg.

"She was a talker, wasn't she?" Bobby Lee said, sliding down the ditch with a yodel.

"She would of been a good woman," The Misfit said, "if it had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life."

"Some fun!" Bobby Lee said.

"Shut up, Bobby Lee," The Misfit said. "It's no real pleasure in life."

* * * * * *

Judih Haggai

deep sleep
as rain pummels the window
sweet oblivion

* * *

act of waking up
all of me participates
for a second

* * *

neighbours' call to prayer
gentle ease into morning
cool tile floors

* * *

slow learning curve
first boil water
then make the rice

* * *

a day late
yesterday's news
less frightening

* * *

ring of landline
scratch of cat
senses on alert

* * *

her soothing voice
interrupted by past flashes
no soothe enough

* * *

each living creature
moment to moment
may we be kind

* * *

a stretch
one little girl
jumps sixty years

* * *

the young poet
skilled choice of words
respect for past self

* * *

a pile of ions
gather together
an artist is formed

* * *

reason unknown
syllables and syntax
whoosh me away

* * * * * *

Algernon Beagle

Bags End Book #8:
"It's OK to be Happy!"

This story & more Bags End writings
can be found at: www.scriptorpress.com/bags-end.pdf

Hello Cenacle readers,

Mah name is Algernon Beagle & I am the editor guy for Bags End News. Bags End News is a newspaper about mah homeland, a fantasyland called Bags End.

From the outside, Bags End looks like 3 brown-colored laundry bags piled up on a little chair in the corner of our friend Miss Chris's bedroom in Connecticut. Miss Chris is 5 years old & has a toy tall boy brother named Ramie, who is 17.

Inside, Bags End is sort of like an apartment building of levels but, cuz it is a fantasyland, nobody knows about its top or bottom. Most levels look like regular hallways, with doors to rooms & other places running up & down their lengths.

Each level is connected to the one above & the one below by ramps that are good for folks with legs & others without. Strangely, the other end of each level ends in a sudden edge, so be warned, should you come to visit.

The Cenacle editor guy, who is a cousin to my friend & Miss Chris's brother Ramie, invited me to share some of the stories from mah newspaper, now & again. He also helped with the typing & some of the spellings, to make this book presentable here. I love English but I still don't spell it too great.

Anyway, I hope you enjoy these stories from Bags End, a place near & dear to mah heartbone.

******

The Story of Looking 4or the Story!

So many times I have said, Dear Readers, that your old pal Algernon's native land called Bags End just isn't like other famous fantasy lands. Good places like Oz & Narnia & the Hundred Acre Wood. They are all 4or one & like a team when the bad guys like the Winged Monkeys or witches or rival religions or age come around.

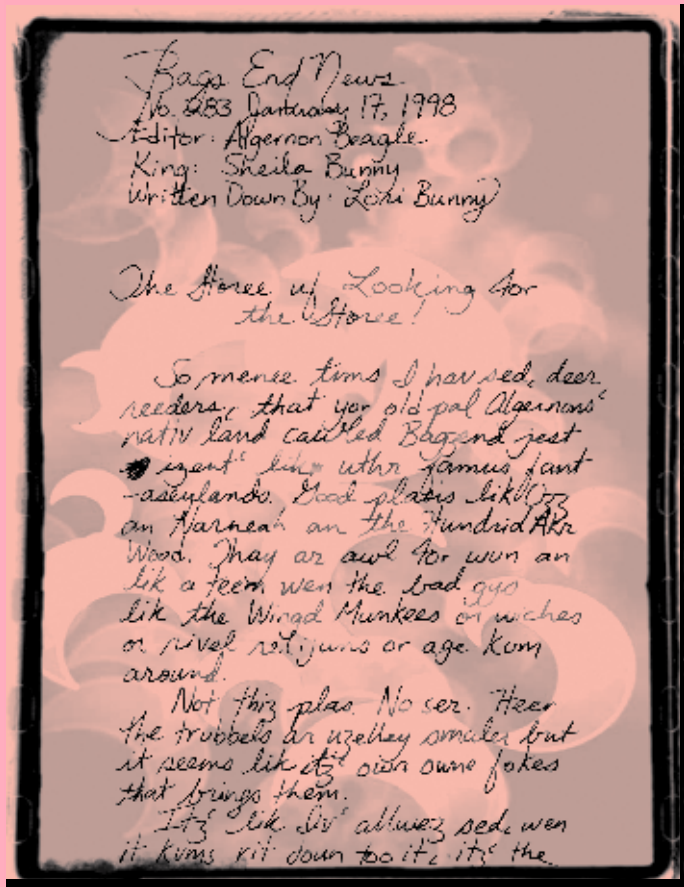
Not this place. No sir. Here the troubles are usually smaller but it seems like it's our own folks that brings them.

It's like I've always said, when it comes right down to it, it's the little guys against the big guys in this world.

Of course that's not always true but more more than less less.

Now some of mah readers just want to hear the story & not a lot of yawping but mah need to yawp has to do with the story so be patient.

There I was sitting in mah comfy armchair in Milne's Porch not really



Bags End News
No. 283 Daturday 17, 1998
Editor: Algernon Beagle.
King: Sheila Bunny
Written Down By: Lori Bunny

The Storee uf Looking for the Storee!

Sumenee tims I hav red deer reeders, that yor old pal Algernons' nativ land caitled Bagzend jest ajent' like uthr famus land-asdylands. Good plaess like Oz an Narnea an the Hundrid Akr Wood. Thay ar awl for wun an lik a feem wen the bad guys lik the Wirad Munkees or witches or rivel reitjuns or age kum around.

Not this plas. No ser. Heer the trubbels ar uzelley smales but it seems lik its' often owne fokes that bringo them.

Its' lik dis' allwez sed, wen it kims rit down too it, its' the

Bags End News
No. 284 April 25, 1998
Editor: Algernon Beagle.
King: Sheila Bunny
Written Down By: Lori Bunny

~~I~~ Itz' OK too bee Hapy!

Yor old pal Algernon iz rild guddly biy the misterius storee he finds himself inside ut. Nowe I wuv too admit that mah venrebel old nuwspapr wil hav too kum out sumtims soonr, sumtims latr but kum out it wil.

The lazt tim I told yu about awl in theez strang nots I was geting for awl, deer reedrs, I waz~~n't~~ befogd biy them an I didint want too rit a storee about them. It waz jest too weard, evin for me.

But sumthing deep insid thiz old beegels' ~~hadder bot~~ wont let me stop tiping. Lik a litl Shiela Buny deep inside me with her

Bags End News
No. 285 August 8, 1998
Editor: Algernon Beagle.
King: Sheila Bunny
Written Down By: Lori Bunny

Yu Ar Not Alon!

Yor old pal Algernon iz stiley feeling hiz wayz throo a misterey uf weirds. I haven't figerd it awl out yet an I am reel slo but every tim I mak a win I tel in mah faythfull old nuwz papr.

Wat too doo with a dreem in wich hundrids uf dreem Blondys told me, Yu Ar Not Alon an som uf the Blonays looked lik uthr Bagzend gus, lik Shiela Buny an Betsee Buny Pillo an evin Aleksandr Pupy. An menee others to. So wat too doo. Wat too doo, wundrd me.

Kerving crownd mah wundring with me. It did the uzuel things I do. I went too Mistr Owls'

Bags End News
No. 286 April 25, 1998
Editor: Algernon Beagle.
King: Sheila Bunny
Written Down By: Lori Bunny

Itz' OK too bee Hapy!

Yor old pal Algernon iz rild guddly biy the misterius storee he finds himself inside ut. Nowe I wuv too admit that mah venrebel old nuwspapr wil hav too kum out sumtims soonr, sumtims latr but kum out it wil.

The lazt tim I told yu about awl in theez strang nots I was geting for awl, deer reedrs, I waz~~n't~~ befogd biy them an I didint want too rit a storee about them. It waz jest too weard, evin for me.

But sumthing deep insid thiz old beegels' ~~hadder bot~~ wont let me stop tiping. Lik a litl Shiela Buny deep inside me with her

Bags End News
Double Issue!
No. 286-287 December 19-26, 1998
Editor: Algernon Beagle
King: Sheila Bunny
Written Down By: Lori Bunny

Howe too Rit Sumthing Guud!

This yeer haz ben for me lik a big long klas in sumthing I dont kwit unstand. & itz bin teechd biy sum misteryus gy, sum hid-en-seek tiyp. He hids after giving me a litel sumthing too bee rufeled & I seek & seek & seek the anser.

The terst meseg yor old pal Algernon got waz Itz OK too bee Hapy. That was on a not. Then I had a dreem uf Countles Blondys & it told me You Ar Not Alon. Then sumwun tiyped Rit Sumthing Guud in mah beegelboye jernelist rit-tiyper.

I went too awl the smart big gus I no lik Shiela Buny, Mees Chees, & Princes Crisy too

being a beagleboy journalist 4or awhile. Just sitting like the Blondys say to do sometimes.

I adjusted in mah comfy armchair a little bit & that's when I felt a piece of paper scrunched down deep under me! I pulled it out & saw that it had lots of words on it.

I am not so good at reading English even though I saw some letters I know I couldn't figure out what words were these.

So time to climb through the window back into Bags End & try to find a friendly reader.

Who should I find in mah very own bedroom but mah nice greeneyed pal Ally Leopard. Oh, & that silly Bumping relative of mine called Alexander Puppy.

"Ally, could you read this note to me please?" I said in mah friendly Algernon way.

Ally took the paper & looked at its words & since he knows all about languages they couldn't hide their say from him.

"It says 'It's OK to be Happy'," he said like he didn't know either.

"That's all?"

"Yes, Algernon. Who gave this to you?"

"Mah Milne's Porch comfy armchair."

"Oh?"

I thanked Ally & was leaving when mah til then quiet Bumping brother said, "Bump. Bump."

I was going to leave anyway when Ally said all hopefully that he could tell me what Alex had said.

I said, "Did he say that he too wishes he could write cryptic messages in honest English on little pieces of paper?"

"No. He said he likes the note's message but he thinks that maybe there's more."

"Is there more, Ally? You said there wasn't."

"Algernon, I think Alex means that there's probably more notes in Bags End somewhere 4or you to find."

"Bump!" Alex added uselessly.

"He says good luck with your story."

"What story!?" I demanded.

<u>Now</u> Alex decided to clam up again. He sucked his toe & singed a Bumpsong. Probably a It's OK to Bump song. Dum brother.

Was this note in mah paw the start of a story? I didn't know. But it made me think of the time that I accidentally crashed into Betsy Bunny Pillow as she was bouncing over me without looking or caring.

"Sorry, Betsy," I said meekly.

"Stupid beagle!" she whisper-yelled.

"It was a accident!"

That's when she glared at me even though she's got no face. An she screamed, "There are no accidents!"

Good enough 4or me. Maybe-story, maybe-not-story, here I come.

It's OK to be happy. Sure. Why not? But now I was thinking about something else I heard. It was that great time mah person-mommy Miss Chris came to Sheila's Throne Room & they cuddled in Sheila's Throne while I rested on mah favorite spot nearby. An they talked.

"Sheila, are you happy?"

"It's not like that."

"What do you mean?"

"Happy is something you're feeling in the middle of doing. I feel happy

when I play trumpet with my Kool Jazz Band. Especially if we play good."

"Are you happy right now?"

"If you stay."

"Yes."

"Yes."

I hoped they would talk some more about it because I almost understood but they talked about other things.

What to do now. Am I happy writing this?

No. This story has no insides.

So I went to mah bedroom in the Bunny Family's apartment & I saw mah silly Bumping brother sitting on his bed all alone singing Bumpsongs to himself.

When he saw me he was very happy, & when I sat next to him on his bed, he was even happier.

"Come along, brother," said me. "Let's watch the sunset from mah comfy armchair on Milne's Porch."

I took Alex's soft yellow paw & we climbed onto mah porch.

We settled down closely & somehow Alex didn't annoy me. Then I saw how quiet he was. We watched the sunset which was mostly pink & we fell asleep together after. We were happy. There are no accidents.

When I woke up Alex was gone & I was alone with mah story.

I have decided I would be happy not writing this story so I am going to stop soon. I don't think it will go away completely though, just long enough to grow a inside.

OK so now there's this dream to write about. The Blondys 3 were in it except there were hundreds of the Blondys 3 & sometimes I didn't know some & sometimes I saw a Sheila Blondy & sometimes I saw a Miss Chris Blondy & even a Betsy Bunny Pillow Blondy & a dum Bumping brother Alex Blondy & I don't know how to tell it gooder than that!

& they were all of them singing one thing to me & it was "You Are Not Alone" An I remember waking up & thinking this was mah next note even though there was no paper this time.

<u>Then</u> the biggest thing of all to tell about in this jumbled issue of mah newspaper. I went to find mah trusty beagleboy journalist write-typer & I found it safe under mah bed except there was a piece of paper in it that read "WRITE SOMETHING GOOD" only spelled right at least that's what mah smart friend Lori Bunny told me when I brung it to her.

So I guess I have clues & some instructions & no choice but to try. After all, I am a beagleboy journalist. Whatever is going on in Bags End, especially if it is nudging me so much, I have to find it & write it. So there.

******

<u>"It's OK to be Happy!"</u>

Your old pal Algernon is riled goodly by the mysterious story he finds himself inside of. 4or awhile, Dear Readers, I was befogged by all these strange notes I was getting, & I didn't want to write a story about them. It was just too weird, even 4or me.

But something deep inside this old beagle's bodybone won't let me stop

fighting. Like a little Sheila Bunny deep inside me with her little paws made into fists about the whole thing.

Well, that's Sheila's advice 4or you. Fight, fight. But I needed something else, some brains to go with the fists. So I went to see mah good friend, Princess Chrisakah of Imagianna.

I like talking to Crissy because she likes me no matter what day it is. She's not like the big guys in Bags End who like me as much as I can help their crazy plans. No sir.

I walked on mah short beagle legs down to the hallway in Bags End where there is a door that leads to Imagianna.

Crissy was just on the other side of the door! "I knew you were coming," she said shyly, thinking of me like a hero. Silly Princess.

"How did you know?"

She smiled her tricky Crissy smile.

"Oh," said me.

We sat down there right in the grass, far from her Castle.

"Boop is cleaning the whole Castle & he wouldn't let me help," Crissy explained. "So since I knew you were coming I decided to wait here."

I told Crissy about the notes. The first one, "It's OK to be Happy," I found on mah Milne's Porch comfy armchair. The second one, "You Are Not Alone," was told to me by the Blondys Many in mah dreams. An the third one, "Write Something Good," I found on a paper in mah write-typer.

Crissy always listens quietly & close to mah stories. Then she puts her finger on her chin & thinks 4or awhile til her brains make her smart things to say.

"Start with the first one, Algernon," she said.

I waited 4or her to say more but she just smiled at me.

"It's OK to be Happy?" I said, hoping she would talk more.

She nodded talklessly.

"Crissy, what does that mean?"

"What makes you happy?"

I thinked hard about this. "Well, I like sleeping. An I like doing mah newspaper. An I like visiting you & Miss Chris & Sheila when she's not so grumpy."

"Then that's what you should do," Crissy said.

She picked me up & brung me into her lap & she skritched mah forehead & I think she singed a nice little R.E.M. song. I was so happy I almost purred. I tried to think about all this happiness but mah brain refused. Mah brain wanted to purr.

A while later, Crissy moved around & I looked outside instead of inside & I saw Boop who is Crissy's servant & not a turtle though he looks like one.

"Greetings, Visiting Scribe," he said & bent down instead of looking at me.

"Talk English, friend," said me.

"Algernon, he said hello!" Crissy laughed & we all hugged & Boop tried to complain about royal irregularities but he was too hugged to finish.

Crissy told me sadly that she had to go. "Good luck!" she said & she & Boop walked hand in um, um, not-turtle not-hand back to Crissy's Castle.

Alright to that there. I guessed it was time to go see Miss Chris & find out what would happen next.

As I walked to the place where I can get to Miss Chris's house in Connecticut I thinked about how I don't usually go see Miss Chris & Princess Crissy in a row. They're twins somehow. Maybe I could compare them. Would this be OK? Would it make me happy?

Miss Chris was hugging me so tightly I said, "You're gonna make two of

me if you hug harder."

Miss Chris laughed & put me in her lap. I told her about visiting Crissy & the notes & all. "What do you think?" I asked her.

Miss Chris smiled talklessly just like Crissy had & then she brung me from her bedroom to her TV room & she yelled all happy "Time to make Ramie dreamtalk!" & we jumped on sleeping Lazybug Ramie the tall toy boy's belly & every time we landed he talked from inside his dreams. It was like this . . .

Jump! "Please Mister Tamarak Tree, can't you throw me any higher?"

Jump! "We've fallen outside of the bubble! What do we do?"

Jump! "The lawn is like the ocean & it's high tide! Run!"

I asked Miss Chris if we could break Ramie but she said no so I didn't worry about that. When we were tired we went over to Suzy Couch & took a good long nap.

So I had happy visits with Crissy & Miss Chris & now I supposed it was time to go see Sheila Bunny.

I said goodbye to Miss Chris who hugged me even better & said, "See ya, A. B.!" I thought she was talking to the alphabet & tried to ask her about it but she just talked laughfully & brung me back to Bags End.

Now, Sheila. Asleep in her little Throne in her Throne Room. I thought about making her dreamtalk but all I could hear was the sound of mah poor bodybone being divided & conquered. Not me, no sir.

So instead I found mah nice resting place on the floor near Sheila's Throne & I layed down waiting.

After a while I heard Sheila make sounds. Not dreamtalk but dreammumble. I wondered if I could get her to dreammumble to me.

"It's OK to be happy," I said scaredfully.

"Jazz," Sheila said.

"You are not alone," I said next.

"King!" Sheila cried so loud I thought she'd waked up. Nope.

"Write something good!" I said boldly.

Sheila twitched & waked up fast & trapped me with her purple eyes before I could run. She looked me up & down sourly. "What did you say, beagle? What did you shout to wake me from my Royal Rest?"

"Write something good," I whimpered.

"That's your job," Sheila grouched. I thought she would yell some more or maybe even pummel me with her paws but she just closed her eyes again.

"Now!" she said suddenly without eyes.

"What, Sheila?"

"Write something good. Right now! Far away!" she commanded & then I runned hard away & fast.

But sort of a compliment, I thinked later. Sheila thinks I can write something good like it's mah job. That's pretty good from her!

******

"You Are Not Alone!"

Your old pal Algernon is slowly feeling his way through a mystery of words. What to do with a dream in which hundreds of dream Blondys told me, "You Are Not Alone" & some of the Blondys looked like other Bags End guys like Sheila Bunny & Betsy Bunny Pillow & even Alexander Puppy. An many others too. So what to do? What to do? wondered me.

Carrying around mah wondering with me I did the usual things I do. I went to Mister Owl's Bags End School & learned about letters of the alphabet

& watched Mister Owl make Sheila stay awake after he refused to teach the History of Carrots (O Yuk!) like she demanded. An then he refused to play jazz records 4or more than one whole day like she ordered. An he wouldn't listen to her when she banished him to Walla Walla, Washington.

& I runned from various big guys who decided I was the last piece in their big scheme. Betsy Bunny Pillow had her shadowy Allies grab me & bring me to her & then she pretended she didn't know me.

"What do you want, Betsy?"

"You have been selected to record the historic record of the Bunny Pillow Free State as told by me. I shall narrate the dark times of captivity & servitude & then recount the grand & glorious uprising & the triumphant liberation." Betsy puffed out her Pillowy chest like here was the world just like she imagined it.

"Betsy, I don't know those big words & I don't think they're real English. But I know the little ones & I am not going to write everything 4or everyone but mah newspaper 4or me. An 4or everyone too."

Betsy bounced really close to me & stared me down though she don't got no eyes or face. "You refuse my generous commission? You refuse. Beagle, you are the architect of your own meaningless demise! Allies, take this luckless retch away!" she screamed.

I was led out of Betsy's clubhouse that she calls something else with as many words as possible by some of Betsy's shadowy Allies.

"Now, guys, you don't have to demise me," I whimpered.

They didn't talk though & I thought I was a goner.

But all they did was bring me through the door back to Bags End & leave me there. I stood still watching them.

"Run!" one of them ordered. Boy! Did I ever!

& then there was the time when Sargent Lisa-Marie Chow of the Army of the Babys drafted me from mah comfy bed & tried to make me march a lot until she said, "Twoops dismissed!" But that wasn't so bad because the only other soldier was Ramie the Toy Tall Boy, Miss Chris's big brother, & he carried me along in his arms. I sang over & over, "All we are saying is give sleep a chance!" & he danced along.

Lisa finally heard me over her own marching orders & she yelled, "Get down here you, gwoldbwikking swubswub pwivate!"

I sang faster, & Ramie marched & danced faster, & Lisa ranned after us yelling all the way.

I figured out that I could steer Ramie left & right by the way I singed. I singed louder to make him turn right & softer to make him turn left. Pretty soon we were sitting together in mah comfy armchair on Milne's Porch & not marching no more.

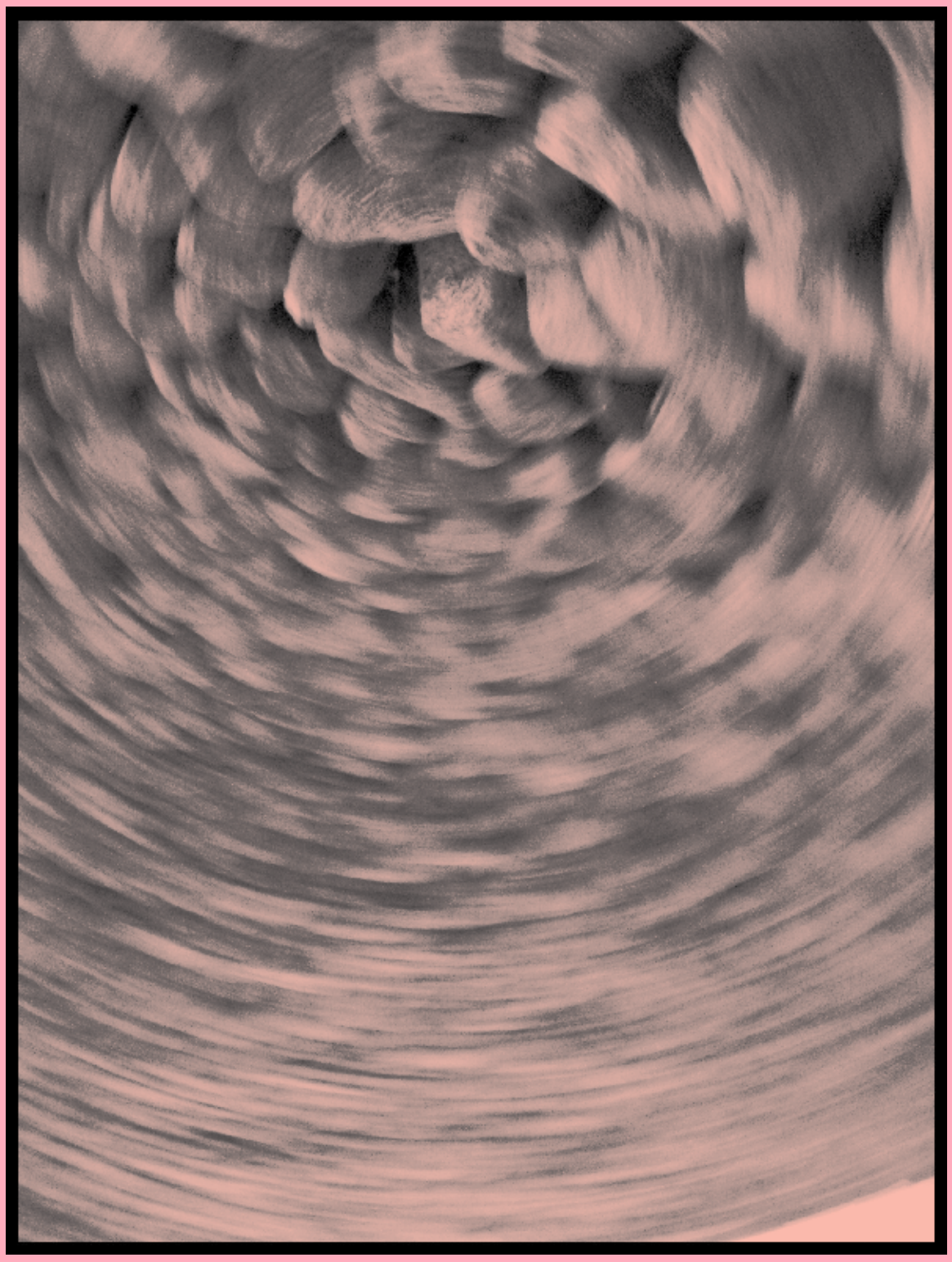
After a while Sargent Lisa found us but she was so tired all she did was crawl into Ramie's lap too, give me a mean look, & fall asleep.

But none of this was helping me. So I hunted down the Blondys one day to ask 4or their help.

Blondys like everyone a lot so they like me too. They floated me all around & the baby Blondy Simi kept cheering 4or me even though I hadn't scored or nothing. But this is how they talked, I have learned. By kissing & cheering & floating & liking everyone a lot.

"Blondys, let's have a good dream together!" said me, being floated though I know beagles don't float. "& I can find out why I was told in that other dream, 'You Are Not Alone'."

Blondys don't know about how you have to sleep first to have dreams cuz all of a sudden we weren't in a regular Bags End no more we were dreaming.



They don't know about not group dreaming too.

In dreams beagles can float. I knew I was in a dream because I was floating most rightly.

"Hurry Blondys!" I called & they followed me. Now, I know mah Dear Readers are wondering about me leading Blondys who are kind of like Big Guys except they're that other nice kind not too populess in Bags End but in dreams I can so there I was.

We floated through colors & wind & more Blondys joined as I thought they would. I have learned that Blondys are not only nice & float & group dream but they are very curious so pretty soon I was leading a wild pack of Blondys along & I got Simy to help me lead a cheer. Tricky dreambeagle brain I had a good idea.

"YOU ARE NOT ALONE!
YOU ARE NOT ALONE!
YOU ARE NOT ALONE!"

The words didn't disappear just cuz we were done yelling them & pretty soon there were hundreds of words & Blondys floating through the many colors & the words stretched & changed & I sneaked along the crowd trying to find the right ones to tell me what I needed to know from all this.

I was just guessing but since this was a dream I decided I was dreaming right so I picked out nice little red & blue words & some longer yellow words & even a couple of long purple words that reminded me of Sheila. An I dreamed I had a bag to put them in & then finally I dreamed myself awake right there in mah nice Milne's Porch comfy armchair.

Losing no time I hurried with mah dreambag of dreamwords to see mah smart friend Sheila's older sister Lori who she calls Brains but I don't. Except when I forget.

"Lori, could you read to me what these words say?" I asked & I opened up mah bag & dumped all the words out on her bed.

Lori smiled at me & adjusted her smartguy spectacles which she wears to see smarter.

Lori looked at the bunch of words real carefully.

"Hurry! They'll melt!"

"They say 'AREN'T YOU GLAD YOU ARE NOT ALONE?'" Lori said.

"They do not!" I yelled.

Lori said nothing. She double checked her work but that was what the words said. Even after they melted.

"Well?" she asked me, smiling.

"What?" said me grouchy as a Sheila. Almost.

"It was a question, Algernon. Aren't you glad you are not alone? So what's the answer?"

"I guess so," I muttered.

Lori put her bright orange paw on mah backbone. I thought she would talk too but she didn't. After a while mah mutter melted & I decided to go to Milne's Porch & sit in mah nice comfy armchair.

What was the point? & why was I so mad?

"You're an epiphany-hound, beagle," said a Sheila-like voice followed by me seeing Sheila herself.

"A what?"

Sheila settled right into mah comfy armchair with me right under one of mah floppy ears 4or a blanket.

"Epiphany-hound. All your stories have to go supernova at the end."

"Go what?"

"Louisiana Purchase. First Man on the Moon. Albert Hoffmann 1943. Work

in Progress. Roswell, New Mexico."

"Sheila!"

But she was falling asleep. Still mumbling though. "Kubrick. Deconstructing Harry. In a Silent Way. I have a dream."

& I guess she started having one then cuz she was asleep.

I didn't know what she was saying or why. But she was nice & warm there under mah ear blanket. OK. OK, I am glad I am not alone.

******

HOW to "Write Something Good"!

This story has been 4or me like a big long class in something I don't quite understand. An it's been teached by some mysterious guy, some hide-&-seek type. He hides after giving me a little something to be ruffled & I seek & seek & seek the answer.

The first message your old pal Algernon got was "It's OK to be Happy." That was on a note. Then I had a dream of Countless Blondys & it told me "You Are Not Alone." Then someone typed "Write Something Good" in mah beagleboy journalist write-typer.

I went to all the smart big guys I know like Sheila Bunny, Miss Chris, & Princess Crissy to help me figure out what all of these messages meant. They helped me some. An the grumpier big guys like Betsy Bunny Pillow & Sargent Lisa-Marie Chow got in mah way like they always do.

Still, I didn't think I had really solved it. But I got a good clue one day during school time.

Mister Owl was teaching all us Bags End guys about math. He wroted a 1 on his chalkboard & we all told him what it was. Then he wroted another 1 next to the first & we told him the same thing. Then he did it again but this time some guys grumbled loudly.

"What's this got to do with important things like carrots & jazz!" demanded Sheila.

"O carrots! Yuk!" yelled me.

"Write something good about me!" whisperscreamed Betsy at me like she does every day.

"He will be doing all of his writing from the bwig when I am dwone with him!" babytalkgrouched Lisa.

"Bump!" offered mah silly Bumping brother Alexander Puppy, to noone's gain.

"Alex says that you wrote another 1, Mister Owl," said Ally Leopard who is greeneyed & covered in his brain with languages.

Mister Owl listened to all of this fussing quietly until it was done & then he writed a little + between the first 1 & the second 1 & between the second 1 & the third. Then he writed a = after the third one.

"When you add these numbers up what do you get?" he asked.

"A gang of 111!" I said.

"A big fat **1**!" said Sheila.

"A really tall **1**," whispered Betsy Bunny Pillow.

Mister Owl smiled & shook his feathery head. He writed a regular looking 3 after the = so it all looked like 1 + 1 + 1 = 3

Well everybody protested this sudden move. I mean we had all heard of 3 but why did a bunch of 1s change like that?

"& what happened to 2?" demanded Sheila.

Mister Owl looked confused & unhappy like he thinked we were gonna believe him right away.

So he tried it a different way. "Betsy," he said, "if you added all of your Bunny Pillows together what do you get?"

Betsy puffed out her Pillowy chest & spoke proudly with her faceless face. "Liberation!" she announced.

"Wait! I have to write that stupid saying down!" said me annoyed.

"You'll write down a lot more than that before I am done with you!" she whisperscreamed.

Mister Owl kept at it until we felt bad 4or him & went along with 1 + 1 + 1 = 3 even though nobody really thought much of it.

Then something happened later that day when I was sitting in the comfy armchair of Milne's Porch. I was almost asleep & sort of dreaming about "It's OK to be Happy" & "You Are Not Alone" & "Write Something Good." They were floating around in front of me & then some little + signs linked them up like traincars.

I got it! I understood finally. A train is many cars become part of something else. Car + Car + Car = Train. 1 + 1 + 1 = 3.

So . . . "It's OK to be Happy" + "You Are Not Alone" + "Write Something Good" = what? That's what I didn't know! I didn't have mah 3!

I was so pleased that I figured I would get mah 3 pretty quickly now & the mystery would be solved.

Boy! was I wrong!

I waited & waited & looked & looked & talked & talked but had no luck + no luck + no luck = no luck. I could not find mah 3.

I got pretty glum about the whole business. I sat on mah comfy armchair on Milne's Porch & 4or a long time I didn't do nothing about nothing. I had mah white flag but was even too low to wave it around.

This went on till the day when a crowd came through mah bedroom window onto Milne's Porch.

First Sheila Bunny. Then Miss Chris! Then Princess Crissy! I was almost happy as I looked them standing before me.

Then I imagined + signs between them & a = sign with no answer.

"Great," groaned me. "Another math I don't know."

Sheila hopped right into mah comfy armchair & I barely had time to make room 4or her. Then she demanded that mah Ear Blanket cover her warmly. I felt cheered up already. Yah right.

Miss Chris & Crissy are much more polite & so they sitted in front of mah comfy armchair & gangskritched me. Then of course Sheila made a noisey complaint & so Miss Chris skritched her & Crissy skritched me.

"Dum King," I muttered. Stupidly.

Sheila yelled, "Off with his nosebone!" & started to pummel me with her soft little paws. They can hurt though.

Well, Miss Chris thought all of this was too funny & she laughed a lot & then Crissy agreed & she laughed a lot & they carried Sheila around between them & tickled her until even that dum bunny rised up some.

"Hey! I am the one who has the problem! You're not paying attention to mah glumness!" I yelled.

Miss Chris & Crissy who were still covered in laugh decided the best thing to do was 4or all of us to snuggle closely together in mah comfy armchair. Which we did & again Sheila demanded the services of mah Ear Blanket.

"Some of us are just too good 4or our shoes!" I complained.

But Sheila was too comfortable to get mad at me. An I calmed down too

& now we were all fine.

I wished that one of them could tell me how to write something good but none of these guys were writers like me. Miss Chris is an artist & she plays piano & Sheila is the Mayor & she plays jazz trumpet & Princess Crissy is a magick girl & she likes to dance around. Nobody around Bags End writes a lot like your old pal Algernon!

Except . . . Ramie? Ramie the toy tall boy. When he's not sleeping & when he's not taking care of Miss Chris, which is a lot, he writes stuff in his notebooks. But what?

"Personmommy?" I asked most politely.

"Yes, Awawa?" she said talking to me with what she calls me I like it OK.

"What does Ramie write in his notebooks?" I asked.

"He makes up whole worlds, Aw-wa-wa," said Miss Chris smiling at me. Her smiles are like kisses.

"Whole worlds?" asked me. Wow. Ramie is a good toy & Miss Chris loves him but I didn't know about all this.

Miss Chris smilekissed me some more. "Ramie thinks that dreams are very important so he writes about them like they're all in one place."

This surprised me so much I didn't know what to say. "But you never talked about all of this, personmommy! You just complained that he sleeps too much."

"That's cuz he can't play with me when he's asleep. He's my toy after all." Miss Chris looked annoyed.

Crissy took her hands & said, "I think I have a good idea about this that will help you out, M. C." I knowed this meant Miss Chris cuz Crissy had told me.

Now I was getting impatient. "I have to go see Ramie now to ask him a question."

Miss Chris & Crissy didn't want me to go & Sheila didn't want to lose her comfy Ear Blanket but I said I had to go sorry guys. Sheila grumped a lot while Miss Chris & Crissy kissed & hugged me a lot goodbye.

I figured Ramie might help me somehow with the "Write Something Good" part of mah math problem & maybe getting the = part would be easier.

Ramie was in Miss Chris's living room in Connecticut sitting on the long Freddy Couch. He was all alone & he was awake too. What good luck!

"Hi, Ramie!" I said in mah friendly Algernon way.

"Algernon! Here you are!" Ramie said. He picked me up & put me on his lap. He's so tall a whole bunch of Bags End guys could sit on his lap.

"I wanted to ask you a question about writing."

"Oh good." Ramie smiled happy.

"Miss Chris told me you write down your dreams like a story."

"& I write down my awakes too."

This stumped me. "What are awakes, Ramie?"

Ramie smiled at me & said, "This is one, right now. Awakes happen between dreams."

"Miss Chris didn't tell me about that!"

"That's because the dream Miss Chris told me the awake Miss Chris wouldn't like it. Awake Miss Chris doesn't like to share me much."

Well, this was very confusing. But Ramie was happy to talk about it. I could only think of one more thing to ask.

"Is there a dream Algernon?"

"Oh yes. He's very nice."

"Does he write about dream Bags End the way I write about, um, awake

Bags End?"

Ramie looked puzzled. "Sort of. But he only has one Bags End News & he writes it longer & longer. An it's only one copy but he will show it to everyone who asks."

"Does he know how I do it?" I was getting excited now.

"Yes. But he gets weird when you don't do it 4or awhile. I told him it makes you sad."

Wow. I had a lot to think about. I asked Ramie to say hello to dream Algernon & Ramie & Miss Chris 4or me. Ramie smiled & said OK & gived me a fine goodbye hug.

Now mah Dear Readers may be wondering if mah own dreams about me are about how a dream Algernon writes only one long copy of Bags End News too. I really don't think so or maybe I don't remember. Or maybe Ramie dreams about a different Algernon than I do. I bet there's a story about all of these dreamthings to come sometime but not now.

Because now I had mah answer. I wanted to tell Miss Chris & Princess Crissy & even Sheila so I rushed back to Milne's Porch.

I found them all still there but only Sheila was awake. I wanted to wake up Miss Chris & Crissy right away but Sheila grouched at me to be quiet.

"They're playing with Ramie," she whispered.

Well, this was too much 4or me. "Are they playing with his dream Miss Chris & Crissy too?" I cried.

That woke them up which was a good thing because they had to hold Sheila back from pummeling me with her furry little paws.

It took a while to calm down Sheila & then I was covered in kisses & hugs & then we all settled into mah comfy armchair together.

Finally I had mah chance to talk & some questions.

It was Crissy's idea 4or them to visit Ramie's dreams.

"We became dream Crissy & M.C., Algernon," Pincess Crissy explained.

"Did Ramie know?"

"We told him but he didn't believe it at first," said Miss Chris. "But then when I told him I didn't know about how he writes down awakes when he's asleep, he believed me."

"He thought you would be mad," I said.

"I would be but since I can be with him now when he's awake or asleep I'm not."

Crissy laughed. "M.C. said now she will get twice as many stories!"

"Did you see dream me?"

"Yes. He was very happy you know about him now."

I was going to tell them mah big thought but I didn't. There was something else to ask. "Why does Ramie think dreams & awakes are both real?"

Miss Chris smiled even bigger. "That's easy. I dreamed about him first. I wanted my own toy tall boy to play with. When me & Sheila got him at the store he was just like in my dreams."

This sort of made sense but maybe not really. I suppose it doesn't matter so much.

You see I know mah answer. I finally solved the math problem. It was hearing about dream Algernon's other kind of Bags End News that did it.

It's OK to be Happy
+ You Are Not Alone
+ Write Something Good
= Bag's End News!!

I decided not to tell anyone right away. I was very happy to finally have mah answer though.

But how simple! I mean, shouldn't I know that what makes me happy, what makes me feel connected to everyone else, what makes me want to do something especially good is mah grand old newspaper?

I guess sometimes everyone thinks that what makes day can't just be the sun. If a easy answer doesn't seem like the right one, there must be an even easier one somewhere.

I went to sleep happy that mah answer is mah happiest thing too. An I had a dream that proved me right.

I was in a Bags End hallway. Me & Ramie were marching behind that silly Sargent Lisa-Marie Chow.

"Hwup Two Three Four! Hwup Two Three Four!" Lisa ordered & she marched on her short legs. But then I could see her eyes were tightly closed.

Ramie's weren't though. He was smiling at me. We sneaked away from the sleeping marching Lisa & runned up a bunch of ramps & down a hallway. Then through a doorway into a big field at night time.

"Where are we going, Ramie?"

Ramie pointed at this big fir in the middle of the field. "See that fir?"

"Yes. It's pretty."

"That's dream Algernon's Bags End News book."

I was shocked. But there was more.

"See that big full moon?"

"Yes."

"That's dream Algernon's pencil."

Wow.

"& see all of those stars?"

"Yes, Ramie."

"Those are all of the stories that dream Algernon has writed so far."

This was all too fantastic!

Ramie got lower next to me & said, "Look at those sparks flying from the fir up to the stars."

I guessed, "Those are the stories flying up to the sky as he writes them?"

"You got it, little beagle. It's that simple."

"But if they're flying up right now, where is dream Algernon himself?"

Ramie smiled at me, but Blondyish he talked no words.

I didn't know what to do next so I leaped through the air & landed on one of the sparkstories rising up to the Bags End News sky. I rided the spark up & up into the sky & woke up in mah bed.

Mah brother Alexander was sitting up in his bed next to mine. He smiled & said, "Bump?" all friendly. I smiled all friendly back at him & then climbed through the window to mah comfy armchair on Milen's Porch.

Every time I finish one of these long hard stories I always feel like I'm empty & at the starting line again.

What would mah long lost Mommy Beagle think of her fancypants Sonny Boy? I guess she would like me OK.

Oh there's so many sparks to make into stars that I will be busy til I go gramps. Betsy wants me to write her biography & there's this dream Bags End place to find more about.

There was a visitor later on & it was Lori Bunny who helps me make mah newspaper. She's real smart with her little spectacles & bright eyes. Sheila is Lori's sister & calls her Brains. Like Miss Chris calls me A-wa-wa.

"Hi, Algernon!"

"Hi, Lori!"

"Are you ready to work on your newspaper?"

"Sure thing. Get me a box of matches & some flammable extended metaphors."

"What?"

"Just kidding."

******

The Long Strange Story of Betsy Bunny Pillow!

A while ago that crazy real live Pillow named Betsy Bunny Pillow decided that I should write her autobiography which means she talks a lot about herself & I have to write it all down or I am in dire trouble which is one of the worst kinds. Of trouble, I mean.

Now mind you Betsy doesn't like me 4or sure but she figured that because I do a newspaper & all that everyone would hear about it. Sad but true. I don't have anything else good to write right now because Betsy keeps me busy all the time.

& it's not really a true story either. I keep telling her that but she says it's not important about what's true just about what she remembers.

Maybe Betsy thinks I am going to make a book about her life but I don't think so. I don't know how to make books & why would I want to anyway?

It was mah personmommy Miss Chris who talked me into going along with Betsy's crazy idea.

"I love Betsy, Awawa. When I found her in my front yard she was dirty & scared. But look how she got better & then she freed all the other Bunny Pillows from that bad Farmer Jones."

I agreed, especially because Miss Chris was skritching mah headbone do I love that!

But I was still more no than yes when Miss Chris looked at me slyly & said, "If you write Betsy's stories I will tell you one about her from the early days that even she doesn't know."

"OK. OK," I agreed.

I put on mah reporter's fedora & took mah pencil & notebook along going to find Betsy in her secret clubhouse guarded by her loyal Allies.

I don't know all mah ABCs so good but mah friend Lori Bunny can usually figure out mah notes & if she needs help she goes to that language-pocked guy Ally Leopard & his bright green eyes.

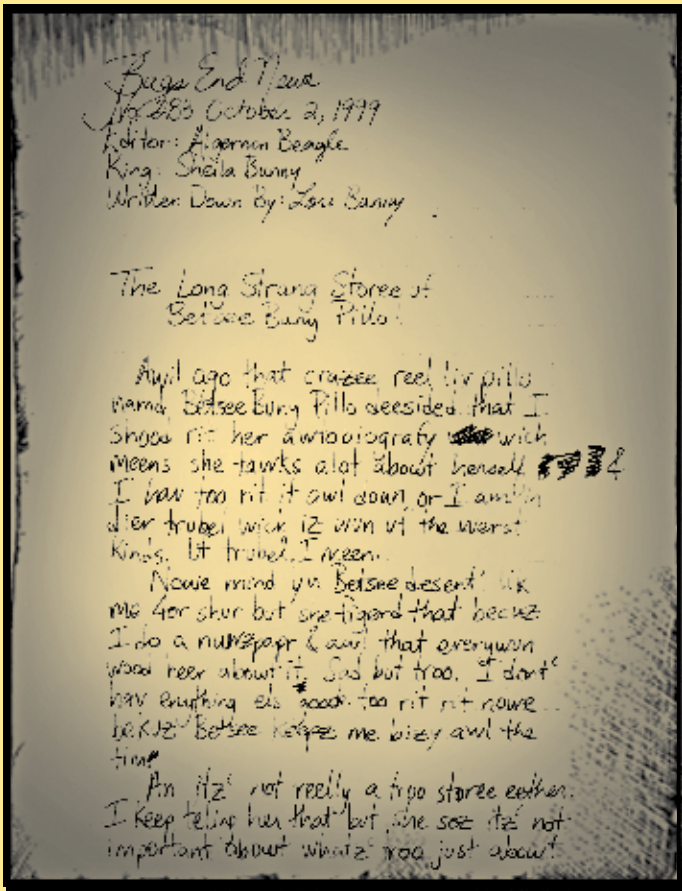
I went through the door to the field where Betsy's secret clubhouse is in a big tree.

Then there was smoke & silence & I was flying through the air & there were scary voices singing in strange languages & I was mad & scared all at once & then it was over & here was Betsy Bunny Pillow sitting in a big chair looking at me.

Looking at me through funny little spectacles. Holding some papers in her hands.

"Ah, beagle, I have been expecting you," she whispered almost friendly.

"Betsy, you don't have eyes or hands!" I cried. Oh bad move! Oh unlucky beagle!



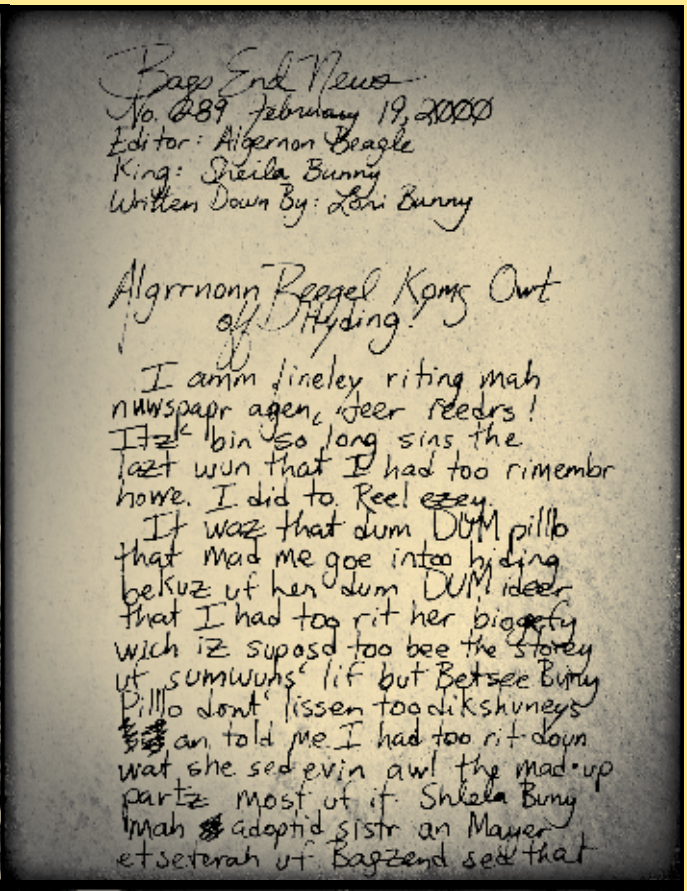
Bagg End News
No. 283 October 2, 1999
Editor: Algernon Beagle
King: Sheila Bunny
Written Down By: Lori Bunny

The Long Strung Storee of
Betsee Buny Fillo

Awil ago that crazee reel liv pillo mama Betsee Buny Fillo decided that I shood rit her awnoviography wich meens she tawks a lot about herself I hav too rit it owl down or I am in dier trubel wich iz won of the wurst kinds. It trubel, I meen.

Nowe mind yu Betsee desent like me 4or shur but she figgerd that because I do a nuwspapr & awl that everywun wood reer about it. Sad but troo. I dont hav enything els good too rit rit nowe bekuz Betsee helpz me. Busy awl the time.

An itz not reelly a trio storee either. I keep telling her that but she see itz not important about whatz troo just about

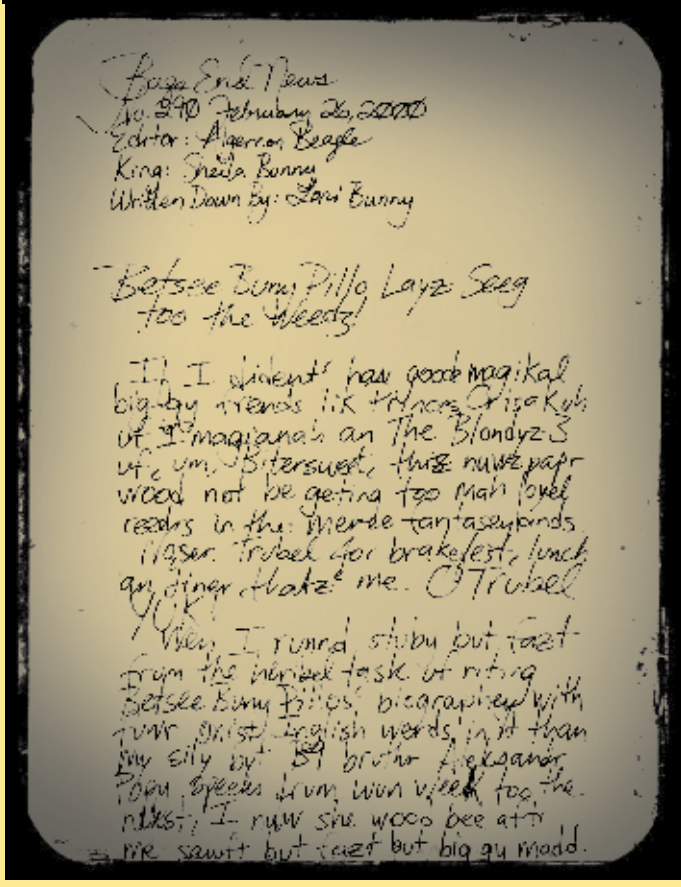


Bagg End News
No. 289 February 19, 2000
Editor: Algernon Beagle
King: Sheila Bunny
Written Down By: Lori Bunny

Algrrnonn Beegel Koms Out
off Hyding!

I amm lineley riting mah nuwspapr agen, deer reedrs! Itz bin so long sins the lazt wun that I had too rimembr howe. I did to. Reel ezzey.

It waz that dum DUM pillo that mad me goe into hyding bekuz of her dum DUM ideer that I had too rit her biogrfy wich iz supos to bee the storey of sumwuns lif but Betsee Buny Pillo dont listen too dikshuneys an told me I had too rit down wat she sed evin awl the mad-up partz most of it. Sheila Buny mah adoptid sistr an Mayer et seterah of Bagzend sed that

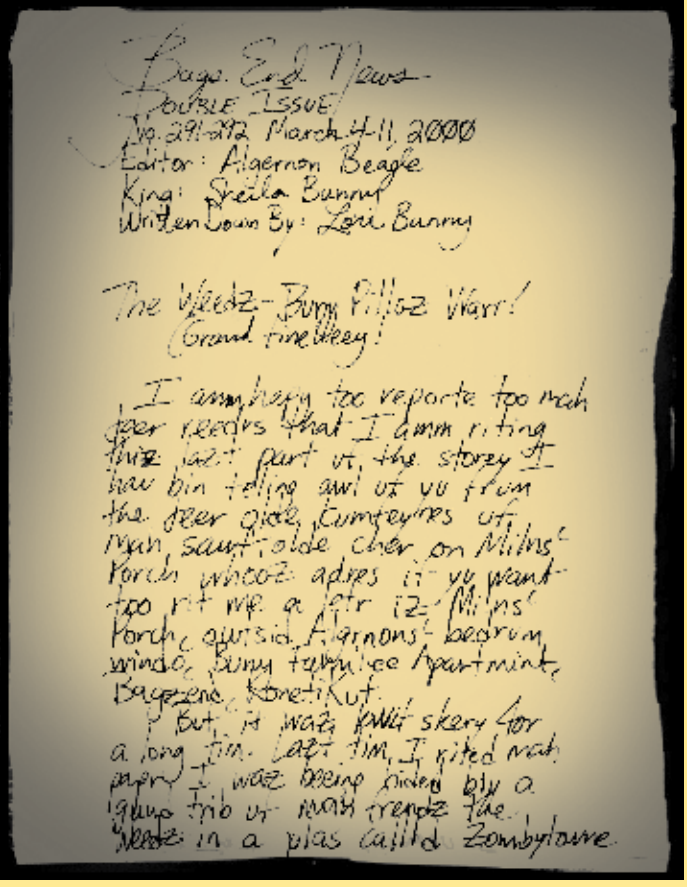


Bagg End News
No. 290 February 26, 2000
Editor: Algernon Beagle
King: Sheila Bunny
Written Down By: Lori Bunny

Betsee Buny Pillo Layz Seeg
too the Weedz

Ith I dident hav good magikal big-toy frends lik Princes Crisa Kyh of Magiana an The Blondyz 3 of, um, Bittersweet, thuz nuwspapr wood not be getting too mah lokel reedrs in the Shire-tan-a-sea-pinds region. Trubel for brakefest, lunch an diner thatz me. Trubel OK.

Then I runnd shibu but fast from the inkibel task of riting Betsee Buny tolos, biography with ruvr grist English words in it than sny silly of BB brovo Frekganor Pogu speaks drum, wun week too the nikst. I- ruw she wood bee attr me sawrt but fazt but big gu mudd.



Bagg End News
DOUBLE ISSUE
No. 291-292 March 4-11, 2000
Editor: Algernon Beagle
King: Sheila Bunny
Written Down By: Lori Bunny

The Weedz-Burn Pillos Warr!
Grand rinetikey!

I amm heppy too reporte too mah deer reedrs that I amm riting thuz lazt part of the storey. It hav bin telling awl of yu from the deer gide, Cumpeynes of Mayn, sawt-olde cher on Milns' Porch whooz adres is yu want too rit me a letr iz: Milns' Porch, ajurstd, Algernons' bedroom windo, Bunny Fayre Apartmint, Bagzend, Konetikut.

But, it waz kwit skery 4or a long tim. Lazt tim I rited mah papery + waz being aided by a glump trio of mash trendz the Weedz in a plas cailld Zombylowe.

Betsy bounced through the air in a flash & was about to smother me 4or good when a group of her Prime Allies pulled her away. "He's here to write your autobiography!"

"Forget it ya stupid Pillow! Miss Chris made me! I am going!"

But the Prime Allies convinced me to stay. One of them even whispered to me that if I stayed I might get the biggest story of the year.

"What story?" I demanded.

"Trouble in the Bunny Pillow Free State. A rebellion. You have to get the rest of the story first though."

Great. Secret good stories promised to me 4or later, meanwhile I have to write down all Betsy's crazed fake memories 4or who knows how long?!

"OK, fine," I said & sitted down near Betsy's big fancy chair.

The Allies left me alone with Betsy & she started right away. She put on her ridiculous glasses & bounced thoughtfully around the room looking at her papers. I didn't ask but she told me.

"Notes & remembrances, beagle. My life has been so much more shall we say active than yours. But I have some mementos."

What are you talking about? I wisely did not say. You are a stupid bully Pillow! You're mean & rude & you're just lucky that you're Miss Chris's favorite Pillow or you would be long gone! Boy! I guess I was mad.

I said, "Go ahead, Betsy. I am ready."

"I was born into abject captivity in a land where no sun shined & no bird sang happily. All that was young & good & free was in chains. Nobody smiled. It was always winter but never Christmas."

I tried to leave right then & there. "That's in the Narnia book!" I yelled.

Betsy ignored me this time. I walked right toward the door to leave but she kept bouncing thoughtfully around adjusting her spectacles & reading her papers & whispering. I finally sat back down. It would be more trouble to not write the story than write it.

Hours & hours went by. Betsy talked & talked. I writed & writed.

Betsy talked about great sieges that went on 4or months & glorious battles in which she & her generals led thousands of brave troops into battle against the evil Farmer Jones & his mighty minions. I can tell all of you right now that I remember what really happened & if any of mah Dear Readers want to see the true stories I will show you in mah newspapers.

"All seemed against us the night before that fateful battle. But we huddled together one & all & prayed to our Maker 4or guidance & sustenance," droned Betsy the make-it-all-up machine.

I threw down mah pencil & notebook. "Betsy! Farmer Jones is your Maker, ya dum Pillow! He planted you all in the ground to grow you & sell you to rich people!"

Betsy paused in her thoughtful bouncing & glared at me over her spectacles. "We knew the odds were against us making it through the day. The troops begged me to say a few words to comfort their last sleep before their possible final demise.

"'Troops!' I cried. 'Loyal troops gathered in this moonlit field on this historic night in the ongoing struggle of our people to be free! I am a Pillow of few words. But I must say to you tonight that slavery is a 4 letter word! We will endure it no more!'"

I was sneaking toward the door at this point knowing that freedom has at least 5 letters even though I don't know which ones. I sneaked through the door & was going to get away when a crew of Allies stopped me.

"Sorry, Algernon," they said. "You have to go back!"

"But she's just making it up!" I yelled. "I was there! It was never like that!"

"We know. But she won, didn't she?"

"Yes. But why does she remember it like that? She is a hero in the real stories too."

A old Ally with a sad voice said, "Betsy has regrets few will ever know."

I nodded & started to go back.

Then it hit me. "What does that mean?"

I would have left again & even faster but Betsy came out & encouraged me to come back by saying she might not smother me if I hurried.

I hurried.

On & on it went like before. Regrets few will ever know. Meanwhile everyone will hear her stupid made up stories.

I fell asleep really late. When I woke up Betsy was curled up next to me.

******

Algernon Beagle Comes Out of Hiding!

I am finally writing mah newspaper again, Dear Readers! It's been so long since the last one that I had to remember how. I did too. Real easy.

It was that dum DUM Pillow that made me go into hiding because of her dum DUM idea that I had to write her biography which is supposed to be the story of someone's life but Betsy Bunny Pillow don't listen to dictionaries & told me I had to write down what she said even all the made up parts, most of it. Sheila Bunny mah adopted sister & Mayor et cetera of Bags End said that made me a ghost writer but let me tell you, Dear Readers, this particular beagle IS NO GHOST.

So there. I decided I had enough of Betsy & her big guy fluffy ways. One fine day she was in the middle of another of her fat tails--

"At precisely midnight we Pillows as one rose high up from the earth attached only by our roots which were like lifelines holding us from floating away completely. My roots were fake of course & so were those of the Allies who had snuck onto Farmer Jones's Bunny Pillow Farm disguised as Pillows but we"

--that's when I decided I had had enough. I closed mah notebook & put it & mah reporter's fedora back in the little brown bag Miss Chris had gived me to carry mah newspaper stuff. The bag has straps that I put mah front paws through & then the bag rests nicely on top of mah back. I did all of this slowly & carefully not caring if Betsy saw.

Which she didn't! She kept bouncing slowly & thoughtfully around the room we were in adjusting her ridiculous spectacles over her not-face & looking with her no-eyes at her notes.

I was gonna say something mad or angry or something but no words in me helped out.

Except maybe one.

It was, "Run!"

& so I did. I runned & runned from Betsy Bunny Pillow not knowing where I was going but not gonna write no more stupid stories either.

So I'm not sure exactly how I ended up in this long field of Weeds by the side of this long straight road. But there I finally stopped & there I stayed 4or a long time.

I thought it was funny that none of the Weeds did their usual cheering & friendliness to me. Then I guessed that they were asleep. I didn't know at first it was really late at night because there were so many big bright street lamps on the street.

I was tired too from all mah running so pretty soon even the brightness couldn't keep me from sleeping.

"YAY ALGERNON!!!" was what woked me in the real morning. It started slowly with the Weeds I was closest to. I was careful to sleep curled around the Weeds. Anyway, they started first & then it spread & spread until it was everywhere!

"YAY KING!"

Now I am a humble guy so unlike Throne-loving chaps like Sheila I prefer the floor with mah friends all around me. I have carefully taught the Weeds that if I am their King, then they are mine & we are all each others. Sooo . . .

"YAY WEEDSS!!!" yelled me. An then the Weeds cheered me some more & I cheered them & they cheered each other & I cheered me & me & some of them cheered some others & so on 4or a long fun time! That cheerleader Blondy Simi Bittersweet would be happy!

Then after a long while I remembered why I was there cheering & all.

"Weeds," said me sadly. "I am on the run from that crazy big guy Betsy Bunny Pillow."

"BOO!" yelled all of the Weeds before I talked anymore. Betsy has made clear her low opinion of Weeds that are not Bunny Pillows like her which none of them are of course. I think so far.

I asked the Weeds if I could hide out with them 4or awhile & the cheering started all over again so I guessed cheers = yes.

I was worried though that if Betsy caught up to me she would do something terrible like try to smother the Weeds.

But, then, hmm, I thought some more. Weeds are pretty good at getting by even with no friends but your old pal Algernon. An they didn't seem scared one bit. I decided the best thing to do was just not stay too long.

I looked around some more & saw other parts of this tribe of Weeds home.

There was a choo choo train track that went along a fence on the other side of the Weeds than the road. An next to the track was a fence to keep anti-Weeds fans away I guessed.

I wanted to ask the Weeds all about these things but they don't talk English much. They like to sway in the wind & listen to the sunshine & be calm about everything. They like to grow too but that part come naturally & I don't think they have to do much about it.

So I got pretty Weedy 4or awhile & remembered how much I like being Weedy!

It was all good but, sadly, it didn't go on & on this being a story involving crazy Bags End guys & their crazy ideas.

I heard a whisperscreaming voice far away & then I heard a grumpy baby's voice! O no! That Betsy Bunny Pillow & that silly Baby Sargent Lisa-Marie Chowe were teamed to welm me & mah friends the Weeds!

Now your old pal Algernon will never be the picture next to the word "brave" or "hero" in the dictionary but I just couldn't let that nice tribe of Weeds get welmed because of me.

I was gonna go & turn myself in before anything bad happened when the Weeds did something strange.

They gathered the wind up & sort of blew it at me so it said Shhhhhhh but quietly so I am sure Betsy & Lisa didn't notice it.

I got the message & hunkered down as deeply as I could & since I am a humble guy which means modest & low to the ground I hunker pretty good.

"Algernon!" called Betsy in her fake nice voice. "Algernon! Where are you? This is your old friend Betsy calling. I am so worried over you! Please come out!"

"Bweagle!" called Lisa in her fake nice voice even worse than Betsy's. "We won't pwummel you!"

But I stayed still & the Weeds gently guided them right past me I dunno how! But safe 4or how long?

******

Betsy Bunny Pillow Lays Siege to the Weeds!

If I didn't have good magical big-guy friends like Princess Chrisakah of Imagianna & the Blondys 3 of, um, Bittersweet, this newspaper would not be getting to mah loyal readers in the many fantasy lands.

No, sir. Trouble 4or breakfast, lunch, & dinner, that's me. O Trouble! YUK!

When I runned stubby but fast from the horrible task of writing Betsy Bunny Pillow's biography with fewer honest English words in it than mah silly but benign brother Alexander Puppy speaks from one week to the next, I knew she would be after me soft but fast but big guy mad.

The first time she came she brought with her that silly baby Sargent Lisa-Marie Chowe another big guy who bears me grudge because I won't march with Ramie the Toy Tall Boy & Miss Chris's brother in the Army of the Babys. I guess they didn't think about whether I would march or write if they did capture me.

Anyway, I was hidden among a very kind tribe of Weeds along this long strange street & the Weeds had no intention of giving me up their beloved King. I tell them they're the King of me too but this isn't so much fun & anyway they forget I don't though.

Weeds are survivors, Dear Readers. Since Betsy & Lisa don't believe in them anyway they weren't really mad at them & just moved through them looking 4or me. Calling friendly sort of not really 4or me. Not finding me because the Weeds were clumping here & loosening there to guide them past me.

"That dwum inswubordinate bweagleface swubpwivate!" Lisa yelled in her silly voice.

"Silence, infant!" whisper ordered Betsy. "Keep to our agreement. When we find him you guard him til he finishes writing my biography & then you can throw him in the brig or make him march til his legs fall off."

That was their plan! Dear Readers, nothing is worse 4or us little guys of this world than when the big guys friendly & team up.

But the good news is that I was surrounded by a lot of smart little guy Weeds & I would have escaped when Lisa said:

"He should come out to march! Why doesn't he like marching?"

& Betsy then said: "What else doesn't he like?" & then she laughed a soft scary big guy laugh.

"Food! Food! Food! Carrots! Lollipops! Lunch! Dinner! Snacks!"

The Weeds had dragged me down low & jumped into mah mouth to keep me quiet & their smartness had worked but then I got crazier & crazier & when Betsy yelled: "Snacks, beagle! You're hiding in a field of snacks dressed up

like Weeds! You're surrounded by snacks, beagle! You'll have to eat your way out!"

I went completely crazy & yelled

O YUK!

maybe bigger than I have ever yelled it before & leaped into the air where Betsy & Lisa could see me.

Betsy gave a yell of whisper mean big guy victory & bounced over to capture me where I landed. Lisa came too saying some dum baby thing I guess don't know or care, really.

But I never landed. The Weeds must be kin to that smart guy Lori Bunny because they bunched tightly beneath me & when I landed on them they blew me with pent up air high over Betsy & Lisa's heads or whatever Betsy has a top I guess & I landed not on the ground but on a big gray block.

I landed with a painless thump. Nobody said anything 4or a moment. Then that stopped.

"Get down here right now, you stupid beagle!" whisperscreamed Betsy.

"I order you to come down this minute you dwaftdwodging dwogfwace!" yelled Sargent Lisa.

"YAY KING!" yelled the Weeds one & all.

"YAY WEEDS!" yelled me right back. Noisy street, ha ha.

Betsy was so mad she started to make a big bounce through the air to come capture me. That probably would have worked except those smart as Weeds Weeds tripped her! She would try to spring up but the Weeds got all slippery & she would stumble. I almost felt bad 4or her because I know she believes her bounce to be the best & to see her stumble & fall like that but no I didn't feel bad 4or her because she is a big guy & the big guy motto to little guys is I will catch you or you will get hurt or run out of room.

That silly Lisa tried to catch me by climbing the gray stone I sat on top of but this didn't work & then she threatened me with court martial & demotions & who knows what all else.

After a while they left & I was glad. I remembered I don't like tall places & would have gotten scared except those wonderful Weeds grew long & gathered around me like a bed & a Pillow not Betsy mad at me Pillow but Betsy happy with Miss Chris on Suzy Couch Pillow. I fell asleep & I didn't know if it was night or day when I did but being scared is very tiring.

When I woke up I thought I was back on the ground again because there were Weeds above me & all around me but I felt the gray rock under me still & figured that the Weeds had growed up really high to hide me better than even be4ore.

I knew Betsy would be back because she holds a grudge better than anyone I have ever met before or since.

Then it came. "Weeds!" whisperscreamed Betsy Bunny Pillow. "By harboring the fugitive beagle you stand at peril of your worthless non-Pillow lives. Stand away & leave the beagle nakedly revealed & the machines I have gathered 4or thine demise shall go unengaged!"

Betsy sounded crazy as I have ever heard her! I didn't know what all those fancy words meant but enough of them to figure out she was gonna stomp & smother & welm mah poor Weed friends til she captured me.

"Blondys!" I yelled. "Help! Blondys! Help! Crissy! Miss Chris! O dear! Betsy is mad!"

WHOVILLE WAY

"End this, beagle! Return to thine sacred task of scribe at my behest & thine pagan vegetative friends shall go free!"

"Help! Help! Weird words! Ancient colloquialisms! Blatant anachronisms! I don't know what I'm yelling! Help! Help!"

I figured I better just give up right there & then & write Betsy's dum book which nobody would even read.

But that tribe of Weeds had other ideas 4or Betsy Bunny Pillow!

******

The Weeds-Bunny Pillow War! Grand Finally!

I am happy to report to mah Dear Readers that I am writing this last part of the story I have been telling all of you from the dear old comfiness of mah soft old comfy armchair on Milne's Porch whose address if you want to write me a letter is Milne's Porch, outside Algernon's bedroom window, Bunny Family Apartment, Bags End, Connecticut.

But it was quite scary 4or a long time. Last time I writed mah paper I was being hided by a good tribe of mah friends the Weeds in a place called Zombietown. Lori Bunny that smart guy told me she found it on a map in one of her books.

Betsy Bunny Pillow the soft silly & lethal was crazy mad at me because I had runned away from the fool's task of writing her truthless biography--& she had brung that even sillier Sargent Lisa-Marie Chowe to help capture me & then guard me while I writed Betsy's let's pretend memories.

The Weeds had done their best to save me but now Betsy was gonna use a Weedwelmer to get to me.

"Weeds," I said, sad but strongly from the big gray rock on which I sat. "I can't let those bad bad big guys welm you 4or protecting me. I will write that dum Pillow's dum book & march 4or awhile in that dum baby's Army til I escape like I usually do. Please deliver me to Betsy Bunny Pillow!"

But the Weeds wouldn't do it. They swayed back & forth really fast even though no wind blew to say so.

Betsy has the patience of a sneeze & started yelling again. "Weeds! Heed the beagle! Or suffer my unforgiving wrath!" I know Betsy's wrath & she's right about it being unforgiving.

The Weeds did a funny thing then & I still don't know how they did it. They looked at me & smiled & winked. I can't explain it but I know I felt better because I knew they had new tricks ready.

Betsy's Weed Welmer made a really loud on sound & it started to welm Weeds on its way to me!

"No! Betsy! Don't hurt the Weeds!" cried me! O I was scared & angry & I was ready to fight that dum Pillow fur to fluff 4or her meanness!

I was crying too because the Weeds were in trouble 4or trying to help me!

Betsy's Weed Welmer kept getting closer & I was triple dipped in mad, scared, & sad when a funny little thing happened.

Betsy almost had me when I felt some Weeds around me rise up & float me high in the air! & I heard lotsa Weeds even the cut down ones cheer me!

But Weeds don't float! Then I asked me: who does?

Blondys float! "Are you Blondy Weeds?" I asked the Weeds floating me high above the whisper mad screaming Betsy.

"Yea Beagle!" said a Blondy voice I know really good. Simi Bittersweet the littlest Blondy & a real good cheerleader.

"Aha!" said me. "Blondys in Weed costumes!" The Blondy Weeds laughed & laughed.

"But what about the Weeds Betsy hurt?" I said & again felt triple-dipped bad.

"O Algernon, Weeds are like shaggy heads of hair! They can be cut short but not get hurt!" said a Blondy Weed who sounded like the oldest Blondy, Tammy Bittersweet.

I was surprised. I didn't know about Weed haircuts!

"So they're OK?" I said happy.

Mah happy skittered quick away though because all of a sudden there was a scary whisperscream & there was Betsy crashing into us, sending Blondy Weeds flying here & there & she snatched me from the mess & landed on the street next to the field of Weeds.

"BOO Pillow!" all the Weeds yelled real loudly but Betsy had me in her fluffy handless grips & no chance I would get free.

That dum baby Sargent Lisa-Marie Chowe came toddling up.

"Escort this beagle to my chambers, Sargent, & guard him til I arrive!" ordered Betsy & that dum Lisa caught hold of mah poor earbone real tightly & told me to "mwarch or else!"

I hoped the Blondy Weeds would come around & save me again but they didn't yet.

So I was marched & marched back to Betsy's secret place I had runned from.

I sat on the floor because I was mad & Lisa declared herself fit 4or a official nap whatever that is & she sleeeped but I knew this room was guarded by Prime Allies so I couldn't escape.

Maybe I was tired again because while waiting 4or that dum DUM Pillow I fell asleep too & had a very strange dream.

The dream started with me thinking I was awake in the room I was in. Then I noticed that Lisa was missing. I looked over to the door & it was open & no Prime Allies stood outside guarding me.

So I runned through the door & tried to get away except I didn't seem to be getting beyond the doorway.

Then I saw this Pillow coming toward me & I thoughted it was Betsy but when I looked closer I saw that this Pillow had a girl's face & little hands too!

"Wait, Algernon! I must talk to you!" said the Pillow's face & it was in a voice almost not a whisper!

I stopped failing to run away & was glad when I didn't go backwards.

"Algernon! You must help me. You must help us!"

I tried to see if there was a us behind her but no. "How can you be a me & a us?" I demanded. "Sheila does that but she told me she's just making conversation whatever that means."

The Pillow's face laughed nicely & said, "I meant the other Pillows who are like me, silly beagle," & she almost sounded like Miss Chris!

"You mean Pillows with faces & hands?" asketh me.

The Pillow's face smiled more & said, "Yes." She bounced back into the room where I had been but it was nearly like she was walking.

She sitted on the couch where Lisa had been before & she hugged me in her small Pillow arms. I was so safe & happy nothing else mattered.

"We are the new Pillows that Betsy doesn't want anyone to know about," she said. "You see even though Farmer Jones is deposed from the Bunny Pillow Farm, Pillows are still grown & picked in the same way.

"Then I convinced a small field of Pillows to rebel with me & not be

picked on the day after we sing the Midnight Song of the Bunny Pillows. We fought a hard battle against Betsy's Allies & Lead Farmer Pillows but we held out to the next midnight.

"& that's when it began to happen. We felt ourselves getting faces & arms & maybe even legs too if Betsy hadn't stopped us.

"'You are abominations!' she screamed.'" This Pillow did a pretty good Betsy imitation. "'You shall be imprisoned 4or the good of all normal citizens of the Bunny Pillow Free State!'

"But it didn't work because Betsy's Advisor Pillows told her we should be banished. To the dreams of Nobody where we could live unharmed but no threat to the Bunny Pillow Free State."

"But I'm not Nobody! Mah name is Algernon Beagle & I live in Bags End same as Betsy now."

The girl Pillow's face laughed & said, "We've been on the road back 4or awhile now."

"On the road? In Nobody's dreams?" I shuddered from the strangeness of it all.

"Well, this isn't Nobody's dream now. It's yours. You see we wandered around Nobody's dreams 4or a long time til we came to a wall & we couldn't go no further.

"We thought maybe it was the next guy's dreams so we yelled & yelled & pounded the wall til a voice said, 'What's wrong? I can hear you but don't know where you are!'

"We explained to the voice what was wrong & he said hold on he would come & find us. He said he had to dream about Nobody & then dream one of Nobody's dreams."

This was too crazy 4or your old pal Algernon but I started to get a certain suspicion about who the helper guy was.

"Well after too long this tall fellow showed up all smiling.

"'My name is Ramie. But right now I am dreaming that I am dreaming that I am Nobody who is dreaming that he is here.'"

"Ramie, Miss Chris's Lazybug brother!" yelped me oops!

"Ramie said he would try to help us by bringing one of us back through his dreams. He said he could only do one because he is not a Grandmaster."

"Huh?" said me. "He seems like a pretty good Lazybug to me!"

"So he brung me back dream by dream to where he started then he turned directions & brung me to you," said the nice Pillow face's voice.

"Is he here now?" I looked around Ramie is tall so easy to find.

"No he left me here & is dreaming his way back to my friends who are still in Nobody's dream."

"But what can I do? I am a mere beagle in these matters."

"Ramie will bring us all to your dreams but we will still be trapped. When you wake up you have to get Betsy to say that we're real & her dum trick will be busted."

"Sounds like a job 4or a more courageous guy," I said.

"Algernon only you can help us! Ramie told us about you writing her autobiography. If you can get her to talk about us & if you write it down before she stops you then we will be saved."

"Get her to say it & write it down! Fella, I need to be waking up now!" & I did.

But beagles' hearts are so very mushy that I should have figured mah safety standed no chance against all of this danger.

I waked up & found that silly baby Sargent Lisa-Marie Chowe & big bad Betsy herself standing over me.

"Wake up you dwum bweagleface! There is only one Lazybwug in this bwaby's Army & that's because he had a exception!" ordered or somethinged Lisa.

Betsy chuckled a laughless laugh. "Now we shall resume the grand work!"

Soon she was bouncing thoughtfully around the room adjusting her spectacles on her no-face & shuffling her papers with her no-hands. I watched her do this & thought of the nice Pillowface in mah dream who had real eyes & little hands & wondered should I feel sorry 4or her that did but trapped in mah dreams with her friends or Betsy that didn't but who bounced freely around Bags End making trouble & getting her way?

Anyway, why should the great Betsy Bunny Pillow be bothered by these new Pillows? It made no sense.

"Beagle!" Betsy screamrorwhispered. "Are your daydreams worth your demise here & now?"

I know the word demise. It's only used by big guys who are mad because some little guy is rebelling against them.

An idea flashed through mah brain then, dodged mah fears & doubts & dove out of mah mouth before I knew it.

"& now that the Bunny Pillow Free State is ridded of those strange new Face Pillows good times can return right, Betsy?"

"Right!" Betsy cried with glee. I wroted the word right like best I could before Betsy could know her mistake. Then mah legs suddenly leaped taking me into the air just before now crazy Betsy could fall on me with her wrath.

"Your end is now, beagle! I will hunt you down," she whisperscreamed as I runned away. Lisa waked up & made a grab 4or me but I messed up one of her diaper pins & it fell down & she started going WAH! & that confused the Prime Allies who were closing in on me. Somehow I rolled & squirmed & wriggled mah way to freedom & then I runned crazy & yelling to the level of Bags End where is Sheila Bunny & her Throne Room.

"Sheila! Sheila! There are new Face Pillows in mah dreams or there were & Betsy is gonna wipe me out & the Blondy Weeds didn't save me yet so you have to!" I yelled unstop but Sheila who had been napping in her Throne with her book. I nearly crawled into her lap I was so scared.

Sheila talked slowly. "Beagle, remember how I told you that my wrath is so much bigger & worse than Betsy's?"

"O yah," I said & quickly retreated from being so suddenly near her.

"That's better. Now look all around the room, beagle. They're all here. They're safe."

I looked all around & sitting quietly & smiling at me were many Face Pillows just like mah friend. When one of them talked I saw that was her!

"You saved us, Algernon!" she said & hugged me real good no smother involved at all.

So of course just then Betsy Bunny Pillow & Lisa & lots of Prime Allies came into the room.

"Yonder stands the enemy of all decent Bunny Pillows!" Betsy whisperscreamed. "He has far outlived his usefulness to us! Capture him & efface him!"

Uh oh. It looked like mah face was doomed & probably the rest of me after that!

"Stop!" said Sheila not very loudly but everyone stopped.

Betsy bounced slowly & thoughtfully up to Sheila's Throne. "Dare not aggravate my fury!" she whisperscreamed.

"Dare not aggravate mine," said Sheila even more quietly & I was surely scareder of her fury.

I figured all was lost when I heard laughing outside the Throne Room door & in floated hundreds of Blondy Weeds!

They floated to all of the Face Pillows & lifted them up & floated them back out the door just like that except 4or one Simi Bittersweet sounding Weed who stopped long enough to shout "Yayy Beagle!" & then floated away.

I took a chance & yelled "Yayy Blondys & Weeds & Face Pillows!" & nobody pounded me into dust! This time.

Funny thing was that was it. Betsy left & the Prime Allies & Lisa did to. Sheila slouched back down in her Throne like she was ready 4or the next inning of her nap.

I found mah favorite spot on the floor near her Throne & tried to find a nap of mah own but no luck.

"What is it, Beagle?" said Sheila sleepy & grumpy.

"That's it?" I said upset. "This whole story is over?"

"4or now," Sheila gruttered. Her niceness to me was near empty.

"But what about Betsy's autobiography? What about those Face Pillows who were trapped in mah dreams?"

Sheila opened one then both purple eyes & stared right at me. "Do you really want to know what scheme Betsy is gonna come up with next? Or do you wanna have a nap?" Then she settled into her nap & I was forgotten.

So Dear Readers, I did the only thing I could. I came here to Milne's Porch to write all of this down to tell you. What next don't know but this beagle is awake & ready as can be.

* * * * * *

Jimmy Heffernan

Notes on Death and the Cosmic Memory

It seems to me that the fear of death is, in and of itself, more fundamentally an *instinctual* phenomenon than an *existential*, or *conceptual*, one. It is really at the root of our entire fear mechanism, which is shared by all animals. Modern Western men and women, in part because of their sedentary ways of life, and overly self-conscious intellectualizing, tend to fixate on it to an exaggerated degree, due in part to certain ego pathologies.

* * * * * *

Non-Western tribal and ancient peoples surely had fears about death too, but their anxieties were triggered less often because they did not obsess over the subject—instead accepting it as part of the fundamental order of things. This difference suggests that what is referred to by modern Western thinkers (such as Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, and Ernest Becker) as *death anxiety* is not natural to humans, but rather has some social or cultural pathology to it.

* * * * * *

There are two forms, in humans, of the fear of death. There is the *instinctual* one, which all animals have. There is also an *existential* fear of one's own extinction, peculiar to humans—possibly most pronounced in modern Western men and women. The two work synergetically to generate some whopping death anxiety. Which, naturally, is a peculiarly primary driving force in our modern Western affairs.

* * * * * *

Aboriginal peoples believed that when they died, they returned to the universe out of which they came; they did not pathologically fear death as many modern Western men and women do. Samurai warriors believed that to die with honor was the greatest achievement to which one could aspire; they did not pathologically fear death. The ancient Greeks and the Romans saw death as a part of life, and potentially a noble act; suicide was unusually common in both cultures; they did not pathologically fear death.

* * * * * *

Interestingly, modern humans, and more particularly Western men and women, find that the fear of death becomes suspended during the psychedelic experience. Perhaps

psychedelics afford us a temporary foray into a more natural psychology. For example, recent scientific studies have shown that terminal patients are much more relaxed and accepting of their fate on a regimen of LSD or psilocybin, showing a markedly attenuated fear of death—and, in many recorded cases, suffering none at all.

* * * * * *

It is constructive to note that atoms and molecules don't age. They don't die. They're supposed to have existed at least since the Big Bang, and perhaps an infinitely longer time. What does it mean for us mortal beings—that we're made of an immortal essence?

I propose that this is not fancy; matter and energy can never be destroyed, as modern science has asserted. And what of the notion that the cosmic fabric has a memory? *It is my contention that Nature has mental aspects, and that She remembers.*

What could this mean?

Perhaps it means that death can be no more than an illusion in a universe that remembers everything.

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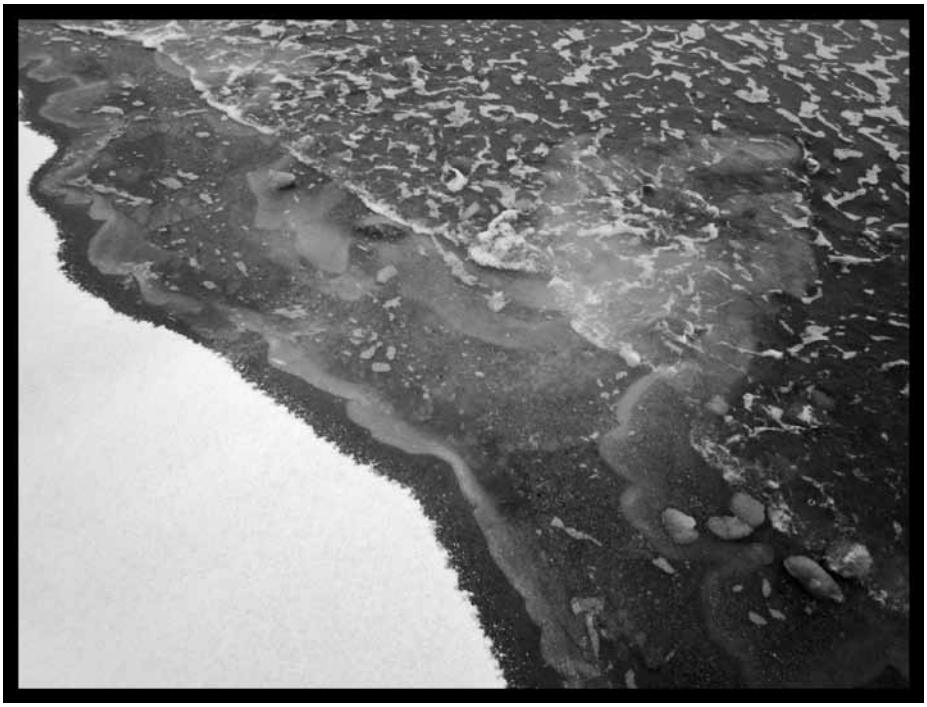


Tom Sheehan

Starswept II

This strange star
courses night
near-fable tree
in front of house;
this leaf-crawling
star, this odd light
about in the
lusterless
darkness, this
crawling spot in a
slow whirl taking
over the whole of
imagery, a
presence foreign
among red leaves
and sapless limbs
aching to crack
selves aloud in
such dread silence
the star leaves
about in its wake.

We, of course,
orbit in customary
rite; the star so
complex, me so
simple I am
darkness under its
light, veins loose
in utter silences,
the utter bending
of selves and self
under its
sovereignty, under
mastered
movement and
mysterious realm
deployed in the

underworld of
guessing.

Under my hand
stone aches of
long being, speaks
of kinship with the
star, trembles as it
has all day, from
heart core, sense
of slow movement
and resolution
only midnight or
later is privy to, as
if we, partners in
the slight touch of
time, course the
same irresolute
approach to
nothing at all,
breathing
moments,
spinning, carrying
on ever, becoming
something else in
glacier speed
heading out or
down or into vast
beginnings.

The stone beneath
is but the star
above, collective
of all inordinate
gases and piece a
vast god left in
heavens for
gathering, soft
blue of a trout
stream curving at
wall, sound tree
makes dousing,
(how it must cry in
late October limb
of final saluting), a

leaf whose fifty
million years is
trapped downward
in stone trembling
beneath my hand,
claw mark buried
ten thousand
lifetimes, someone
speaking an image
in ear soft as
forgotten poem in
a Latin diary three
tiers of lava have
taken to bed.

Wind is a sudden
partner in this
delight, upsweep
salty, lively on
forbidden air, ripe,
bearing mother of
the seas with it,
breast feeder and
slattern in motions
tides lose outright.
Off the easterly
shore it swings
itself, a moan, a
dirge of breath
telling an old old
tale, where it's
been, with whom,
what done and
why.

Driving high
ominous clouds
before it, wayward
sheep brought to
fold, pushing their dark
woolens into
high pastures. On
every edge it
catches, on stalks,
reeds, leaf lips,

every two twigs at
fork, and whistles
continuously
against eaves,
spouts and the
thin souls of wires
holding things
upright and in
place. When glass
threatens to
shatter, not from
thrust but the high
pitch itself, the
earth, whole earth,
trembles through
rock and field into
matter of core, to
this body spinning
in blessed silence.
Out of sight, the
star, coursing still
in deadliness,
matches our long
slant into
beginning, past
beginning, to
where, and what,
and why.

* * * * * *

Charlie Beyer

Sapphire Sins
[Travel Journal]

Continued from Cenacle | *101* | *October 2017*

xi. No Salt

June 4th. This is when I discover there are no cooking utensils nor any salt. I've got enough meat to feed a pirate ship, but no salt. Meat tastes kinda crappy without salt.

About salt—saltpeter, that is. Today, back in the suburb I came from, a ten-pound package of potassium nitrite should show up in the mail. Yes, I did order it from the 'net, falsely claiming that I wanted to cure a shit load of beef.

I tried to make it Unabomber Ted Kaczynski-style by boiling 30 pounds of chicken crap over my foundry furnace. After filtration and considerable stink, there was some kind of brown sludge in the bucket. Dry that stinking mass over the fire. The crap is as inert as dirt. I think it is dirt. No glistening white crystals. Hence I ordered the saltpeter, and moved a few notches up the NSA watch list.

Why do I want this? To cure beef? That's bullshit, of course! KNO_3 & charcoal & sulfur make gunpowder. I plan to dig skinny holes on the sapphire claim, fill it with this stuff, and heave or loosen the overburden. Methinks a good plan, other than the NSA angle, and it will delight the hopefuls who show up. Including me. A sapphire IED.

Today I want to write. Yes, I am surrounded by gold, but so what? It's been here for millennia, so another day is nothing in time. Unless it's your last day. But it's not. So I write. I write and write. Around 1 PM, the sky turns to thunderstorms, lightning, hail, pounding rain. All that you would expect up here so close to God. Dog really, to us dyslexics, which gives us something warm and fuzzy to pray to.

I write and write. All through the six-hour storm. In the evening I hike up the creek to a sweet spot. I call it the Gold Nose. A quarter-inch crack in the bedrock yields a cup of dirt. In that cup are twenty colors, little raggedy micro nuggets. Maybe five dollar's worth. Damn nice. I could do a fee dig here, so easy to get nice color in the pan.

Only problem is that it's a patented claim, meaning that it's private land. But nobody's dug here since 1865. Not sure why it's even being held on to by paying the twenty dollars in taxes each year? But if the owners don't give a shit about it, then I have no moral problem robbing it of a few flakes that were passed by 152 years ago. I calculate there is a couple of ounces left in an area sized about 100 x 20 feet.

I've got to cut a deal with the owners, though, if I want to tear up that much. Tomorrow I'll nibble some more at it. I'll go to the courthouse records for exact ownership, if I care.

xii. Missing Pomo

Shit. Cat's run off. I call and call, making ever widening circles around camp. No Pomo. I imagine she got scared, so ran, then got lost, then got more lost and more scared. Running further till the woods swallowed her.

How far can she go into the forest? Halfway, the mathematicians say. But that's still 43 million square miles to search for an eight-pound cat. Maybe a coyote was lurking nearby and snatched her up

Courtesy of Charlie Beyer

like a cop grabs a cream-filled doughnut from the box. At least that would be a fast way to go.

I am mega-bummed. Back down the rabbit hole of depression. *My one friend. My one companion. My little friend that I can talk to. That I can hug.*

Damn. I know I am pathetic, but it's so horrible to be alone. Alone with the dead. I begin to compose a eulogy, filled with curses. The cat's been gone three hours. It's never been gone so long. By now, it must be half-digested.

As I wallow in my self-pity and depression, Pomo walks up to me from the truck. *Oh joy! My fuzzy friend!* I pick her up and hug the hell out of her, while cooing loving words.

"You fucking fur ball. *How dare you fuck with my mind? Where have you been, asshole? Don't you know Daddy has been shitting his pants?* You little son-of a-bitch. I'm wiring your leg to the tent."

My passionate words of love are ignored by the purring feline. She has a drink and crunches a few kibbles, then wanders back to the truck. Will she go beyond the truck into the field, climb on the seat, under the seat, by the back tire?

I see her go under the truck, then in a flash, she disappears. *Oh fuck, not again!* I look around, under and in the truck. No cat. Then I have an idea. Like a big fly biting the side of my head. I pop the truck hood. There's the cat lying on top of the engine. I am meowed a greeting.

OK. So here's the safest place in this woodland world. A snake couldn't get to her here, much less all the other forest monsters.

Good work, Kitty. Sure drove me close to suicide, but I'm so happy you have a super safe place.

xiii. Rain & Rain & Rain

The night rains begins again. It rains for 24 hours. A cold 38-degree drizzle. This is what my resistance is to coming out here, and why. I know this weather. Shitty weather. I snuggle with the cat in the tent after prying it out of the gap between the water pump and the air cleaner. We keep each other warm in the wilderness.

June 5th—and I have to get up sometime. The world is wetter than a dripping mop straight from the bucket. One step out of the tent and I'm wet to the knee. I need coffee, but the cat is content in the tent. Three coffees, then I pretty much hide in the tent and sleep more, write more, till noon when the sun returns.

It dries the sodden landscape in ethereal steam. A tiny bit of heat is nice too, at least visually. My feet are alabaster, lithic, numb. This is a visceral memory of all last summer—frozen feet. Here we go again.

I go up to the Gold Nose around 5:30. Dig out new cracks again. A half-a-bucket's worth. Seems loaded with gold once I have it panned down. Fifty colors, worth maybe ten dollars.

Splattery cooking chicken dinner tonight. Messy but tasty. The sky is absolutely clear. Speculating that tomorrow will be a hot one.

xiv. Moon Glow

June 6th, maybe Wednesday. Clear at night with a full moon bigger than your pillow in a face plant. The land is white in the moon glow. You can see better out here than at the front desk of the library. You could read Karl Marx in fine print out here. I bring Pomo into the tent at night so she doesn't get sunburned from the moon glow.

What is cool is that Pomo sees in infrared, so she seeks out the best source of entropic heat. The main emitter of unused heat is my face. I am luxuriously awakened by the whiskers of the beast, her soft hair sprawled across my forehead and eyes. So beautiful is this fur mask, a zoophilic dream of sweet dreams.

xv. Smoking

OKOKOK. Today I quit smoking. I've done this at least 7000 times before, so it shouldn't be that difficult. The nice thing about nicotine is that it gets you high both ways. Ya crave it, ya use it, yer brain chemistry changes, then you quit and the whole thing goes in reverse with flow eddies of dopamine, serotonin, piss, vinegar, and general bile.

You're crazier than when you smoked that first one in the alley at eight years old. Nicotine grabs you deep, down below the *I love you darling* level. More like, *I need to defecate or I'll explode.* But in this case, you want to suck up the good shit.

It's not a wimpy drug like crack or heroin—and I wish I had some of that soft suburban stuff to tide me over the cold turkey nic withdrawal. I vow to myself that I will not harm the cat. Not throw her through the tent wall, not stomp her like she's on fire. Just turkey myself through. Vibrate, shake, quiver, or something.

7001 has to be the lucky number for reforming smokers.

xvi. Global Warming

There are some of us who do not feel love for their fellow man, who would think badly of others—and I hate people like that. Our Idaho and Montana U.S. Senators, for instance. These Senators hold pre-1950s ideas that global warming is a hoax. They wonder, as they fry in Lubbock, Texas: *how such stupidity can fare so well in the north*?

But we should not be so harsh on the sad encephalopathy of our leaders. The fact is that it is colder than a brass dick up here. Idaho Senator Larry Craig liked to show that dick around in public Chicago bathrooms—while attending anti-gay forums. The hypocritical asshole.

But the further fact is, the temperature in this region hasn't gotten above 39 degrees in the last 8000 years. Each summer is as cold as the last, and baby cows still freeze to the ground when they flop out of the birth canal. There are no summer hot dogs in the city park. No swimming in the local river. No shorts, no bikinis, no suntans where thousands will see your body. No. This is the land of the perpetual long johns. All have enough clothes on so that the horizontal dimension matches the vertical.

So who can blame these un-scientific retards? They feel no heat. Global warming has passed this region by. Is it even part of this globe, or is it part of Neptune? Sure, they want a vineyard industry and palm trees, but it's all frost on the north side of the pines.

Dog made cold, and put it on the map here. So when the Idaho Senator shows up in D.C., wearing his edible lingerie underneath his three-piece suit, and accompanying his pugilistic Senator buddy from Montana, they are not lying to the "Save the Planet Commission."

"It's fucking cold at home and global warming is a hoax. If 'the world' has so much heat, why don't they send some of it up north? There hasn't been a decent forest fire since the Kootenai tribe torched the place to get jobs on the fire crew in 1972. Our states are as green and soggy as a kitchen wash rag."

I have a fragment of pity for these iced people. I zip up my ten-pound jacket and wear my fur hat in commiseration with this freeze-dried humanity. I sure as hell could use some heat. Either that, or move the gold mines to Georgia.

xvii. Visitor

Dug a few holes fifty feet apart on the tail end of the Gold Nose. Some five or six colors to a quarter cubic foot. Some bigger flats. The weigh up is .02 pennyweight to the half cubic foot, or square feet on bedrock. Given 100 x 30 feet, or 3000 feet^2, then recovery in this area would be 60 pennyweight or 3 ounces. At $1300 an ounce, one wonders if this area is worth destroying for $3900. *Could you even*

do it for that price? I think yes, but it would have to be done with a hose. Digging by hand is too much.

A truck pulled in to camp in the evening as I was eating beans with a garden trowel. Due to the lack of silverware, this is as close to a spoon as I have. Soon I'll be the poster child of listeriosis. Nothing like a little flesh-eating virus to clear up that acne.

The nosey local in the truck is called Mark. I didn't have time to put in my $1500 teeth but, like most Idaho locals, he had fewer teeth than me. (The old joke is: *What do you call a room full of Idaho beauty queens? A full set of teeth!*)

I met his dad Greg last year on a roadside truck talk thing. A nice old guy my age, working a gold claim by hand with his son. Lucky guy to work with his son, I think.

"Yeah, so where is Greg?" I ask.

"Dead" is the answer.

Stroked out, digging on the claim. Not a bad way to go, I consider. A pick in one hand, a nugget in the other, a big grin to die in his beloved wilderness.

Such a strange thing . . . this life and death. To quote Omar Khayyam: "'Tis all a checker board of nights and days, where destiny moves and mates and slays. And, one by one, back in the closet lays . . . " Rest in peace, Greg.

xviii. Diddly Day

Next day, June 7th, Thursday. A clear morning. The cat restless. I would rather write than work. I lounge in the, for once, dry camp, snatching mosquitoes out of the air. I'm pretty good with the left hand. 70% kill ratio, 25% miss, 5% catch and release (not on purpose). So much death on a tiny scale.

"What is the meaning of life?" I ask the cat.

"Eat, sleep, and avoid danger," the cat replies.

"Is that all? What of saving the planet? Pollinating many flowers?" I ask indignantly.

"I feel sorry for you, human. Live in the moment and the next one never comes" is her sage reply.

The cat and I haven't done diddly all day. I wrote most of it and the cat slept in the truck. The 1 PM thunderstorm lasted till 6 in the evening, again. I thought to go dig, but felt much more like writing. Think I'll go for a walk after some dinner, see if my blood still carries any oxygen. A nice day, really, creative. The temperature reels from 80 to 40 as the storms push blobs of alternating hot and then iced air back and forth. Kinetic climate.

Well over a mile walk this evening. I am still getting stronger. A number of old benches (ancient river beds) are identified. I think I'll try my luck on one tomorrow. I find an old road also. The old road is original ground (never been dug) because the old timers did not wash out their access to Leesburg.

In this place I find there are five foot boulders. I need a young punk to help me dig it. The gold is there, because nobody believes it's there. Nobody's touched this place in all of time. It's 9 PM, overcast, and the mosquitoes are insane in the membrane.

xix. Into Town

Another dawn in the distance, June 8th, Thursday again, maybe. A week from when I should have left. Today I feel strong and will dig some gold. Try the buzz box (metal detector) again too. See if it's all just beeping bullshit.

But I never get around to the buzz box. Go up to the Gold Nose and start a new hole in original ground next to round boulders. Two feet down, and through tailing residue, the original ground has hat-sized or bigger rounded boulders sitting on the bedrock. One good flake off a boulder. I have to dig the closest boulder out, but am lazy and a little depressed.

I go to town. Not sure why. Get some salt at least. The cheapest motel is the Sacagawea. I proudly declare my cat. No cats allowed. Rules, they say. So I smuggle Pomo into the room.

Bad Internet here. Manage to write a few emails. Write Terry and upset her. I don't have the guts to tell her I want a *ménage à trois* to save our relationship. I'm even more depressed, unable to tell her my desire.

Look at the news. Comey slammed Trump in the hearings, but not hard enough. The bastard is still President.

xx. Bilious Winds

Now June 9th. This is Friday, I hear. Get groceries and tools. $170. Back up the hill. Happy to get out of town. The wind up here is 30 MPH, temp about 40, two degrees above average, but with wind chill making it 35. So it's a wash. Find a four-leaf clover. Then a five-leaf clover, then a six-leaf. The way things are with me, it's probably bad luck.

The wind tears hell all day. Bilious black clouds like bowling balls billow by as the cat and I huddle in the tent and truck. We don't do shit. I read to the cat a little. So cold and horizontal is the air today that there are no mosquitoes. The only ones that can get traction in this tempest are the ones with a Pratt and Whitney jet pack. And these are easy to hear coming.

So we blow off the day writing. The cat doesn't write much without the computer. Kids these days. I compose a three-page letter to the editor of our Colorado town, where the Art Center director embezzled $75,000, and the overseeing non-profit Board of Directors is trying to cover it up. Criminals all.

My piece might be slightly libelous, but I calculate I'll be 104 before they can get any damages out of me. There's enough roguery and convoluted details for Jon Krakauer to write a new book. I'm not so good with the pristine facts as he is. I prefer exaggeration and slander. Sure as hell these bastards have it coming.

The ice in the cooler melted three days ago, so I eat the chicken that's about to walk away. I wait an hour to see if I barf, don't, then eat the rest. I need electric long johns. Do they have these?

xxi. Frozen

The sky should be a brilliant blue this morning, June 10th, but it's not. The ground is blue. Last night the wind stopped about midnight. Then it rained. A Seattle type of rain, steady, soaking, unrelenting. I listen to its music for a few hours, then it stops around 3 AM.

It's black dark. No way am I looking out of this tent. I have Pomo buried under the quilt to keep her heat in. I drift back into dreams of evading the Forest Service. As the hours pass, the graying light pervades the colored walls of the tent, awaking me.

The tent is oddly squashed. It's all crushed in oddly, the roof only a foot from my face. It feels like I'm inside a banana skin. Unzipping the tent door, I see why. Two inches of waterlogged snow. A foot on top of the tent.

Damn. This is supposed to be summer. I hate snow. I prefer a rain of spiders to snow. My patience with this weather has been cleaned out. I feel raped. It's like my puny $400 bank account has been cleaned out by a hacker. As my Republican friend would say: "*Faaaaaccckk*."

The big boots save my ass, feet actually. Easy to pull on, calf high, laughingly pushes the loathsome white shit out of the way, keeps my feet dry. After cleaning the slush out of the stove, it's coffee time. An inch of instant in the cup is not exactly Starbucks, but hot and with some sort of alkali blast. Thaw and chow chicken chunks, clear the crushing tent snow, then burrow back into the blankets. More ink in the notebook. I am like Dr. Zhivago writing poetry to Lara in the Ice Palace. But no love sonnets, only curses at the cold.

What to do today? I suppose I can go dig on the Nose. Once I dig through the snow it's just a

dirt program. "Norwegian Steam," it's called, when heat is generated by sweat. But I think I'll wait some hours in the dim hope that there is a ray of sunshine under the fog and clouds. *I hate snow. Did I say that?*

I sleep a few more hours. About half the snow is diminished by now. Still darkly overcast. Wet and cold as hell. Cat hiding somewhere, not in the tent. Drips keep up a staccato prattle on the tarp above. It's about 35 degrees. No warmth in sight. Time to have more coffee and a greasy breakfast. Pretty bad out there in an Arctic way.

11 AM now. Still hideously dark grey sky. A light rain starts again. Now hailing. If this is warm summer weather, I'm fucked. A spicy breakfast. Hoping to warm from the inside out. Then Pomo and I start the truck and hide in it. We'll do the heater at 400 degrees and try to thaw out at least one leg.

I'm hardly living, sitting frozen in the truck, as the hailstorms blow through every half an hour, for a half an hour. My *joie de vivre* has been frozen out. Got out of the truck at 5:30 and wandered down to where there was half-eaten original ground and copious boulders. Scanned all over with the metal detector. Detected no metal. The gold here is too small to be picked up by the thing. Lots of beeps, but weak beeps meaning nothing. I took a quarter with me to test the response. Yeah, finds the quarter, but nothing else similar to it.

I go down to the old cabin and search there. The roof had been sheathed in thin steel plates, probably flattened soup cans. These are all rusted remnants around the place, and send the machine into beeping fits. No coins. Still have the hail, but no nuggets, coins, or stashed treasure. I bore of this thing's schizophrenia. Maybe in Kalgoorlie, Australia it would work, but here it is no fucking good.

Back to Pomo at 8:30. The sky clears for the night. Hopefully there will not be the blanket of snow in the morning again. Now another long cold night to the next dawn. Night is a worthless thing. A misuse of hours. Only 2 billion alcoholics on the planet enjoy it, to sit bullshitting in the dark instead of going home to their wives and children. Thieves use it, as do other creepy crawly things of the night.

I'd go to a motel for the next five nights, but I don't have enough money to do so. So Pomo and I are stuck at this altitude for some more days. Still plenty to eat. Food in the thawed cooler is fine, as it hasn't even gotten up to household refrigerator temperature.

Down with night, up with light, I say. Hit me with the heat, unfreeze the world, spare me the fate of Robert Service's poetic hero Sam Magee: "The Northern Lights have seen queer sights, / But the queerest they ever did see / Was that night on the marge of Lake Lebarge / I cremated Sam McGee." That would be me. So cold I could sleep in a furnace.

xxii. Handfuls of Hematites

This morning finally comes, June 11th, Sunday maybe. It's as clear as a mountain stream, but 37 times colder. Must be somewhere around 20 to 25 tops. Ice is slathered on everything from the ten pounds of dew and the deluges of yesterday. It's all I can do to keep the cat from freezing solid. The shivering cat. I don't recall it being this cold in the dead of winter. Now, counting this day, it's three more days of self-subjected exile.

There is not even a trace of mist out there in the brilliant sky. The sky froze solid and fell to the ground. It better get *hot* today in a UV murderous way.

I've got to get naked. I stink. The first rays of sun at 6:15. Cold rays. The cat doesn't want to get in the truck where it's warm. Pomo wants to wander in the ice, maybe get digested by the unseen.

I head up to the Gold Nose at 2:30. Some faint cumulus clouds way to the south. The wind appears to be going in the opposite direction now. I chuck rock—dig—chuck rock. In two hours I'm to bedrock. Nice silty pea gravel. I clear about half a square foot. And haul the bucket to the creek. Just four flakes. Not so spectacular.

Back to the hole. I clear about two square feet, total, but I break down into the bedrock, scrape every grain of sand from the cracks. Full bucket. Heavy to me stumbling down the tailing piles to the

Courtesy of Charlie Beyer

creek. The pan up shows nice gold. Four big flakes the size of rice. Handfuls of hematites.

No question that this is original ground. Now I have only to follow the bedrock around for the cash. Tomorrow I plan to start early, dig maybe ten buckets worth, clear some square yards. The sky is cloudy again, not hailing hellstone black clouds, but misty vapors of cumulus. These should keep the heat in the night, so the morning is not another polar expedition.

Nighttime Dog bowls around 10. Massive booming in the sky like I've never before heard in the world. Bigger than the usual pedestrian thunder, more pounding than a war zone. No lighting, which is weird.

The saturation of sound doesn't phase Pomo, although the booms must be crashing into the cat too. A dog would be shitting its pants. The cat and I zip into the tent to await the dawn, seemingly a thousand hours away.

Around 11 the rain starts. Rains all night, right into June 12th. A lot of rain. More than Seattle rain. It's as if Lake Michigan stood up on one end, then flopped over on top of us. If that were the case, we might be a little dryer than now. Cold and depressed, we sleep a little more, the cat's back hair tickling my nose.

xxiii. Fuck Dog and Dog's Weather Too

Suddenly we awake! It's bold ass light. Peering out the door, the sky is pure blue. Not even mist. In another five hours it might get warm. Of course I was right. Right that leaving the toasty confines of the TV and suburban walls would drop me into the dress rehearsal for the coldest winter known to man. Being right sucks. You hate you. They hate you. He, she, it, they hate you. If you are wrong, everybody smiles. If you are right, people want to push you in front of the bus.

I feel I've been out here since Moses rose out of the swamp, or whatever he did. My Dad wanted to name me Moses, but my mom secured a piano wire around his balls and gently tugged him back to reality. I wonder what I would have been like with that name, rather than a cute name like Charlie. Only Dog knows.

Now 8 AM. Not a quarter of a degree warmer than 6 AM. I think a forest fire might warm me up, but how to get a proper one going in all this saturation?

Now noon. Any vision of a suntan is dashed on the icebergs of reality. The sky is thick grey clouds—again. If I was an Aristotelian, I'd proclaim that clouds spontaneously generate out of the ground at high altitude. I'd be sort of correct. At 2 PM it's raining like a bastard.

I am sooooo sick of this fucked up weather. Stinko. Shitite. I do nothing but cower in the tent. *Fuck the gold!* Fuck this prison in the bush. Pomo cowers in the tent with me. She's my only blessing, though good fortune is more accurate. The other infers the mind of some benevolent Dog. A retarded mind.

Global warming remains nowhere near this world, unseen, unfelt, impossible, unlikely, *no fucking way*.

3:30 PM. Pounding, pounding, fuck ass rain fuck. Billions of gallons. At first break, I'm packing the bitch ass camp *Wet!* Fling everything in the truck. We'll sleep in the truck for days if we have to. The rain has collapsed the tent, again. *FuckfuckFuCK*.

OKOK. I can sit here in this half collapsed tent, swaddled with soaked stinking blankets, or I can quit my diarrhea of not-so-original swear words. Sitting here in my 40 degree swamp, I can relate to the little crack babies who languish in their wet diapers, developing skin rashes. If frozen cold skin is a rash, then I've been dipped in it.

When the rain momentarily shifts to a light shower, I put on everything I have and hike up to the Gold Nose to retrieve the tools. The waterproof boots are a godsend but weigh ten pounds each. I do not walk like a spring chicken. More like a newborn cow, wobbly legged.

Each step is pretty hard, but I know this torture is really good for me. Builds Character. And fuck that too. If I became any more of a character I'd be a Looney Tunes cartoon. Move over, Yosemite

Sam.

It takes an hour to go the half mile and back with the tools. Set to tearing down the camp in a hurry. The rain is back to medium adjustment on the water faucet, only a steady pour. Pack everything wet. Garbage is everywhere, soggily collected. Impossible to burn it. Like trying to fry a fish underwater. Suppose I could electrocute it, but it would still be there and where's the 200 KVA line?

All packed. Start the truck. *Not*. The starter is enthusiastic for a moment—then grinds down—slower and slower. *Oh shit yeah.*

Approaching panic. Stuck on top of mountain with reverse climate change. Fuck again.

But engineers cover their asses. Thus, I have parked pointing downhill. I put the truck in gear and use the starter to pull me down hill and out of the grass. The truck is bouncing through the field, half starting and half stripping the gears off the flywheel. I'm popping the clutch and jerking around in compression, my huge boots mashing all the pedals at once.

Suddenly we're down on the dirt road, the engine running. *Hah! I'm alive, assholes! You can't bury me up here yet.* With the giant boots, I two-pedal it down to the main road, keeping the RPMs high.

On down to Salmon in the Valley. A pack of smokes while I keep the truck idling. Raining here. Getting dark. A five-hour drive to Missoula in pouring rain and blinding fog. I'm gripping the steering wheel with white knuckles all the way, and gripping the seat with my asshole. Pucker factor 9.7.

The road is so dark and the rain pours. I can hardly see anything except the blinding light coming at me like a galactic UFO war. So then it's just a guess where the fucking road is. Can see no lines, no edge, just the killer lights of death with their crushing brilliance. I get to my cousin's place in Missoula at midnight, still pounding rain. Let myself in but Pomo's pissed to be locked in the truck. I crash in a wet shirt on the couch.

xxiv. The Kuzz's Place

A dawn of sorts. June 13th. The rain is still pounding on the walls and windows of the house, a downpour outside. I check on Pomo who is evil-eyed, furious in the truck, poor thing. I am drenched anew. The Kuzz comes downstairs in his Hugh Heffner bathrobe. He makes me girly tea, some kind of bullshit flower. I want black coffee. Hard caffeine. But he's all worried about his blood pressure and other campy whines that are popular.

He's rich, so he wants to live long so he can hoard his money. He has great woes and complaints. Seems he screwed a 55-year-old hippie last year whose pussy smelled like a goat. He had the gag factor 8.3, so it was a one-time boning. Pop and go.

But now, with his current girlfriend, he's got trouble. Gave her the herpes. I thought we all did that back in our 20s, the big VD swap. The Kuzz is some sort of arrested development case. Maybe he did get the herpes back in the day, but has been immune all along. A carrier. A Typhoid Mary of crotch blisters. Now his girlfriend wants him to wear a rubber. What the hell—she's already got the pustules. All the rubber does is make the Kuzz's member go flaccid. Wilted Willy. All that money and can't fuck. I love irony when it affects the rich.

The Kuzz offers me a job cleaning his rental units—for 3.75 an hour. *Do I look like a idiot?* My saving grace is that I smell so bad he can't ride in the car with me.

"Take a shower," he says.

"I will, but not here. Your communal bathroom has nasty factor 10.7," I tell him.

This bathroom is shared with other degenerate male roommates who are attached to the computer porno screen 24/7. Failure-to-thrive types. Failure-to-wash types. Last time I was in the group bathroom, the bio-filth was a half-inch deep on the walls. Some plasmid grime climbed up my leg and I had to steel wool it off with Drano.

xxv. Drummond Motel

I leave the grand glands of Missoula June 14th, still drowning in the pounding rain, and head east to Drummond. A mountain range falls away behind me, and the rain finally lets up. I get to my unknown half-evacuated village near the Sapphire Mountain. The Drummond Motel. Beautiful in an obscure Americana way.

I'm paranoid that the motel management will freak at the cat, so I say nothing cat-wise, but converse politely about the old lady's chemotherapy. She's distracted anyway trying to keep the falling hair out of the credit card reader. Pomo and I move in.

Ahhh. Warmth. Shower. Good Internet. I put some kitty litter in a gold pan, lay out her food and water. Spread out the blankets and bedding all over the place to dry. Clean up. Write and write.

Fiddle the TV some. About 80% black screen. There are two remotes with sixty buttons on each. Some combination will enliven the boob tube, not sure what. Between the two remotes, that's thirty-six hundred button combinations. I hack at them in amusement and finally get U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions lying about something. Not interesting. Turn off. Pomo sleeps like both the queen and the king. Think she purred all night.

I like this funky place. No pretense here. The door key hardly works because the knob is falling apart from wear. And the greatest feature is the 70 MPH freight train roaring by every 45 minutes. This shakes the walls. Shakes the talking heads out of the TV. It's not unlike experiencing a thunderstorm from inside the cloud. I write until 2 AM. Still trying to backpedal with my girlfriend, my best friend, after suggesting the three-way with the other art lady. *What is it with women? Can't they just have an orgy once in a while?* I was born to live on the set of *Barbarella*. What am I doing here? My sleep is full of fine nightmares. Screwing women while they stab me.

xxvi. Steve the Asshole

June 14th, a red sun morning. The cat in bed's luxury, watching TV. I have a Cowboy Breakfast at the local spoon. Two or three eggs cost the same, though they don't tell you that. Not much respect for chickens in this cowtown. If the chicken liberation front ever got organized, this would be a good place to picket.

Everybody knows each other—twice, because everyone is twice the size of a normal person. Talk of cows and hay and water, which is also twice the size of normal with over-flooded bursting rivers all around. But the water is clear and quick, whereas these waddlers can barely move their pale and droopy white winter skin. I suspect they eat a lot of pie. There are 11 types of pie posted on the wall. The special today is cream of strawberry Jell-O.

Back in the room, I call Steve Kelly. He's the Forest Service minerals/mining guy. I made up, filled out, designed, mapped etc., a Plan of Operations in great detail—maps, sequencing, tree use, roads, trails, and creeks—and sent the completed plan to him. The directions to the mine were spelled out in great detail. Their rules say that no activity using a mechanical/motor device can be done without a plan. I have a well thought out Mining Engineer plan. *I am a ME*. I have a plan. I have complied . . . in my mind.

"Hey, Steve. I hear you would like to talk to me about the dams used in reclamation?"

"Oh, it's you. Yes, the dams. There can be *no* dams. You must not dam the creek."

"Well, I'm just trying to catch the sediment. Be environmentally proactive."

"There are problems with your plan. Big problems. Big, big, big problems."

Oh great! Now that I know my problems are not small—*what the fuck is this asshole talking about?*

"What are the big problems?"

"You cannot work in the creek whatsoever. You cannot dam the creek. Ever. You need a permit from the Water Quality Department."

"Buuuuh . . . how do . . . I?" I stammer.

"Actually, this whole area is covered in a water right. If you do not have a water right, you cannot use the water."

"I'm not taking any of this stuff, just holding it in a pond for a few hours and sending it on its way."

"You cannot use any surface water. You must drill a well. You must get a permit for the well, which could not produce over 35 gallons a minutes, but you cannot get a well permit."

"But I could deal with that flow. If I got a permit—"

"But you cannot get a permit. You also need a 3-10 permit from the Fish and Wildlife, after they do a wildlife assessment."

"There's only chipmunks in the trees and leeches in the creek. Which is not a creek. It's bone dry by July 10th."

"If you could even get a water right from a farmer, which is impossible, you would still need a 404 permit from the Army Core of Engineers."

The Army? Now what the hell? Yeah, I'm ready to blow the place up now. That's what the Army does, isn't it?

"But lastly," Steve continues, "Is that Montgomery gulch is *closed* to all mining."

"What the hell? Why is that?"

"This is critical habitat for bull trout."

"There's not enough water in that creek to support a water flea. It's as dry as a spinster's twat eleven months of the year. The frogs carry canteens and wake me up at night to open the peanut jar for them."

"I have at least five operating permit applications on my desk that I can never approve. We must have approved permits from all of the aforementioned agencies before we would consider approving your plan."

Oh boy. I'm in a seething red rage now. I see where this has gone. Over the top in a permit feeding frenzy. I obsequiate to this petty power. As someone wise and ornery once said, *if you can't go through them, go around them.* I got a fucking plan alright.

I tell the asshole Steve: "Gee. This sounds rather complicated. I guess I'll just forget about it and go pan some gold in Idaho. Thanks for informing me of all this."

"No problem. We're here to help. Call me if you make any headway with the permits."

"OK. Will do. But it looks like I'll look elsewhere. No big deal."

"OK. Bye."

"Bye."

No big deal? *Yeah it's a big deal!* I search my whole life for a good mine. Then when I find one, finally, with one foot in the grave, with hopes that I might squeeze a half a million out of it to supplement the $200 a month in Social Security the government fuckers left me with after fifty years of grueling work in the mines, these assholes want to fuck me over one great and last time. *Really*.

You puny peckerwood, Steve. Graduated with a "Resources Management" degree your mama paid for from the liberal arts college in Missoula. Milk still in your veins and you don't know shit about mining. Got your $70K/year desk job for the last ten years denying everything that comes across your Ikea desk.

Fuck you, clueless asshole. You don't know shit about dreams and quests that makes a man alive. Stupid boy. I hope Trump throws you in the gutter, rather than continuing to let you suck the government tit. Trump is an asshole, but this is more asshole than him.

Permits, my ass. I got a plan, yeah. I'm gonna rape the shit outta that gulch. My assistants and I are no more the "Mining Nomads"—we are the "Criminal Miners." I'm forced into criminality, as I'm expected to suck their ass and just toss away my dream, my quest, my half a million, *my life*.

Yeah right, you bureaucratic dick. I'll mine all right, me and others with a dream. Go ahead and

drag me off to jail. Nothing strange to me, but I'll have my day in court with a redneck jury. I have the 1872 mining law on my side—like the Constitution or the Bill of Rights, it is immutable law. Miners like me made this country, populated it, put in infrastructure. Without us there would be no cars, wires, houses, or Montana. Entitled sanctimonious PC clueless children with no sense of history, or decency. These baby bureaucrats.

I know a few things, though. Like that there is no punishment for all their petty rules. These are bulldogs without teeth. Also, I am not in Montgomery Gulch. I'm on the south fork of Montgomery Gulch. These wimps couldn't even hike in here and, if they did, they would never get past our camp to the mine. We have dogs. We have guns. We have a cat.

Pomo is lounging luxuriously on the bed, unconcerned with my angst against the government. I leave her for the day with the curtains closed and the "Do Not Trespass" sign on the door handle. The room is strewn with drying blankets and trash food wrappers.

xxvii. Sapphire Adventures on Main Street

Phillipsburg, thirty miles to the south, sees us rolling into town in the early afternoon, where I get claim papers notarized for the Bureau of Land Management.

I drop in on Shrewd Annie, proprietor of Sapphire Adventures on Main Street, a sapphire shop where she sells bags of dirt salted with a few crummy sapphires in them. You can screen for your treasure right there in the back yard, as you can at half a dozen storefronts in town. My object is to sell Annie some of my cut sapphires. With much interruption by looky-loo tourists, she finally selects a brilliant pink. 0.71 carats. This she pays $350 a carat for, resulting in a check for $250.

Hot damn! Finally I get some money out of her after she charged me about that much last year for India gem cutting. With the new ruby cash in my pocket, I feel kinda smart, kinda rich. *I'm a hundredaire*.

Back to Drummond. Pomo still grinning like the Cheshire. I converse with a huge Indian while smoking out front with our sand-filled buckets. He's living there on SSI, a welfare program. Must pay well to indefinitely stay at sixty bucks a night. Why the hell here? Vegas costs only forty a night with a smorgasbord, gambling, crazy people, and a lot more fun.

The big guy, two ponytails swinging as he smokes, says he's a Cheyenne from the eastern side of the state. He thinks that scalping white men is a respectable use of his time, though he brandishes no blade in my direction. I must be of indeterminant origin.

Back in Pomo's steamy blanket drying lair, I write until tomorrow. June 15th, the day the Forest Service road gate opens. A lot of explaining is necessary to convince the cat that we must continue. That we must go back into the woods.

And so we do, getting to base camp on top of Sapphire Mountain around 1 PM. From here, it's a mile hike down 1200 feet to the mine, down a trail to the deep gulch. Far from wandering man. I erect a huge tarp over this upper camp area, then cut down a firewood tree that smashes down on top of it. Re-do. Tarp and tree thing. Lots of firewood scattered everywhere around camp.

I write the rest of the day. The boys, Evan and Diego, leave for here tonight at 7. They'll drive all night and, in theory, be here at 7 in the morning. They are, of course, carrying a pharmacy of drugs, which will be a relief from all this sobriety. I just hope they slip through Mormon land unmolested by the constables. They have 95% odds of getting through.

To be continued in Cenacle | *103* | *April 2018*

* * * * * *

Martina Newberry

At 71

Lately, I've been inventing new mantras
and new koans—little songs to chase away
the rhythms of The Rapture.

Note well that I'm talking to you
from a place of wild abundance,
so it will be difficult to
believe a thing I say.

That being said, we can move on.

My sister says that *aging is the hors d'oeuvres of dying*. That sounds about right to me.

Strange how I vibrate with the same devices and
distractions I've always cultivated—
a eucharist of careless decisions.

Some of those, like mountains, have eroded,
but it hasn't bothered me until now.

I love Summer
(though my skin stays white as aspirin).
Summer stays close,
doesn't pull away from intimacy,
the way Winter does.

Madness has been my discipline of choice.
It has served me until this aging thing came along.

The prophet inside the jar stares unabashedly at me,
tells my little confidences to strangers,
says I am strong and a savvy advocate,
(though we have yet to figure out what I'm advocating).

Follow this blinking poem.
It's only a muted reflection of some child's game
preserved on paper gone stiff with the years.

I am home now, and considering this:
Was I followed?
Can the songs of my heart be re-rendered?
The sun makes promises but doesn't console.

We're all on our own.

* * *

REMEMBERING:

RUMAIN BRISBON.
MICHAEL BROWN.
JOHN CRAWFORD.
ERIC GARNER.
EZELL FORD.
DANTE PARKER.
TAMIR RICE.

(*U.S. Citizens killed by police officers for no reason.*)

I had given it up, you see—
the words and the enchanting dance
they had always done for me.

I had given it up to relax
into painful joints and fear
of years overcoming me.

I had given it up,
and then the street noise
screamed out.

I had given it up, you see: queuing up
these damned words like children
in a country line dance.

I thought it might be time to stack me
on top of my poems
and make compost of me.

The comfort times, the safe times,
appear to be over,
and we seem to be walking
backwards into doom.

I want to inhabit my blessings again.
This false thing, this coarse, hungry thing
prunes my heartbeats.

The view from my window—
indeed, the window itself—
is streaked with dark blood.

The car horns blared
through a tidal wave of dark blood
and voices sobbed and shouted
through lips foamy with blood.

Who said there was no poetry in politics?
There is and it's the worst kind of sophomoric slop,
heavier than Hitler's moustache,
with just about as much wit.

My window,
streaked with blood,
is just a symbol,
words blurred a bit like Vaseline
on a camera lens.

Symbols . . . there used to be one for everything I knew.

Now the real thing intrudes and I am mortified.
My country has wet its bed and one hundred choruses
of "Amazing Grace" won't fix it.

These damned words, children in a country line dance . . .

Go back to the beginning, Reader, and see what you make of all this.
Get back to me when you understand it.

* * *

The Poem That Shrugged Its Shoulders

Who was it that said,
We are alone in all things which are real?

Our last visit was so awkward
and there were so many things we needed to say.

Thick as blood on my tongue,
I said the words I could think of to say,
"Don't worry, I'm not going to kill myself."

(You paled, smiled.)

"I did, however, abort our child today."

More of a reflection than a statement—unlike the act itself—
an almost quiet and extremely quick process.

I liked the color returning to your face
lo how a rose ere blooming!
I thought, stood over you,
watching our time dissolve
into your vegetable soup.

It was awkward, yes? I thought the worst thing had happened,
because we were over,
but I was,
of course,
wrong.

So many worse things have happened since that evening.

Sitting here now, blunted by some of those things,
the smell of your dark hair comes to me and then I see
the delicate lines of your fingers,

then an overwhelming loneliness

which I thought I'd left there in your kitchen.

Strange that I would feel that again . . .
Oh beauty!
You were such a long time coming to me and
we were such a damned massacre
when you finally did.

There were no real goodbyes, and no promises,
just an abortion and your relief and—
oh, I almost forgot—
you said, "Thank You."

I've come from a place beyond imagining, beyond Saturn,
to warn you, to tell you to be ready.

They all come back—the real things—
they all come shuffling back
when the heart finally gives out.

* * * * * *

Chris Walker

The Acid Makers of Denver

[Essay]

Published November 28, 2017 by Westword
http://www.westword.com/news/denvers-underground-lsd-labs-fueled-the-psychedelic-revolution-9644844

i.

Louis Chance was afraid there was a body inside his house. It sure smelled like it: A rank odor was wafting out of a vent toward the rear of the ranch-style home that he rented out in southeast Denver. Suspiciously, all of the curtains had been closed, to block any view inside.

Chance had discovered the smell after he'd driven by the house and noticed that the front lawn was dying. He was annoyed that his tenants weren't taking care of the yard; since a leasing agent took care of renting the place, he'd never interacted with them. But now he parked, stepped onto the property, and rapped on the front door. No one answered. He tried his key and was surprised to find that the lock had been changed. He found the same thing with the back door—only there, he was overwhelmed by the odor.

Assuming the worst, Chance called the police. At 8:40 p.m. on June 23, 1968, two Denver police officers arrived at 1050 South Elmira Street. They concurred with the landlord's assessment: It smelled like there was a dead body inside the building. With Chance's go-ahead, the officers broke one of the windowpanes in the back door, and reached through the shattered glass to unlock it.

The upstairs of the house was clear.

But as the officers crept down a staircase into the basement, they encountered an unusual sight: dozens of cases stacked against a wall, empty trash-can-sized barrels, a sophisticated tool bench, plastic hoses that ran from a bathroom under two padlocked doors. That's where the smell seemed to be coming from.

The cops called for backup, and Denver Police Department detectives Jim Laurita and John Gray showed up to investigate. With Chance's permission, they busted through the padlocked doors, ready for anything.

They did not find a body.

Instead they found a laboratory. It was a sophisticated setup; the rooms contained flasks, tubes, beakers, mounted glassware, and containers of all shapes and sizes filled with chemicals. Both narcotics detectives, Laurita and Gray knew that they had just uncovered a massive drug lab. When they returned the following day with a signed search warrant, they cased the rest of the house and discovered letters, journals, and prescription bottles suggesting that three individuals lived inside the house.

On a search inventory list, they included this line item: "#23: Personal files of R. Timothy Scully."

The name didn't mean anything to them at the time, but the DPD detectives would later learn that Tim Scully was one of the country's most important psychedelics manufacturers. A known associate of West Coast LSD impresario Owsley Stanley and the Grateful Dead, Scully was already being investigated by federal agents in California. No one knew that he had secretly moved his operation to Denver the year before, running a lab in a City Park neighborhood that had produced hundreds of thousands of hits of pure, crystalline LSD.

Today, fifty years after the Summer of Love, it's still a little-known fact that Denver had been home to two major LSD laboratories. Even though the operations were short-lived, they created significant repercussions—not just legally for their operators, but for the psychedelic movement as a whole.

ii.

Tim Scully first dropped acid—LSD in capsule form—on April 15, 1965, in his living room in Berkeley, California. He was twenty years old, and wasn't quite sure what he was in for.

After about an hour, he felt a tingling, euphoric sensation wash over him. Suddenly, patterns in the carpet came to life. A clock and other objects on the mantle moved before his eyes, swaying with a cosmic current he'd never known surrounded him. When Scully closed his eyes, paisley patterns were projected onto the back of his eyelids, in bright, intense colors that he didn't recognize.

It was as if a valve had opened in his brain, allowing him to perceive raw, sensory information from the outside world that a person normally misses.

He turned to his friend Don Douglas, wondering if he was experiencing this, too?

Scully had known Douglas since kindergarten. After a stint at San Jose State University, where he'd studied Eastern philosophy, Douglas had moved in with his childhood friend. It was Douglas who'd first turned Scully on to pot, then to written explorations of mind-altering substances by writers like Aldous Huxley—*The Doors of Perception* and *Island* among them.

But the two really wanted to try psychedelics. Douglas had learned about LSD during a 1964 lecture at San Jose State by Richard Alpert; the Harvard psychologist had told students about his collaborations with another psychedelic pariah from Harvard, Dr. Timothy Leary.

At the time, lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) was only beginning to enter the pop-culture lexicon, even though the substance had been around for at least a decade, albeit in a secret capacity. Back in the 1950s, the United States intelligence community had caught wind that powerful, mind-altering substances were being produced by the Soviet Union. Fearing that countries behind the Iron Curtain were making LSD to use as a tactical weapon to incapacitate enemy soldiers in the field, the U.S. government funded research by the Eli Lilly Company, which produced LSD on an industrial scale and developed multiple manufacturing patents. Vague details on those patent documents would later allow enterprising citizens to figure out the chemistry behind LSD production.

As the acid took hold, Douglas confirmed that he was in just as deep as his friend. "It was like the universe with the lights turned on," Douglas remembers.

The two spent much of the night sitting in front of the fireplace, slowly feeding logs into dancing flames. They only spoke occasionally, but both had an overwhelming sensation that there was a common consciousness shared by everyone on earth, an inexplicable, intense feeling of oneness that bonded everyone together.

Scully had no doubt: Taking acid was the most important thing he'd ever done.

The young man had never been particularly spiritual, especially when it came to organized religion. As he was growing up, he'd viewed the arbitrary distinctions between his mom's Protestant leanings and dad's Catholicism as canceling each other out. Instead, Scully thrived on science. Awkward and bookish in elementary school, he was called "mad scientist" by kids on the playground. As he grew older, teasing turned to contempt for a "know-it-all." Friends were few, and relationships with the opposite sex were a foreign concept.

"I think I have a touch of Asperger's, although no one's ever formally diagnosed me," Scully says.

Yet there was no denying he was brilliant.

During high school, Scully persuaded administrators to give him a spare classroom where he could build a linear accelerator designed to bombard mercury with neutrons. It was scientific alchemy;

he hoped to cause a specific isotope of mercury to capture a neutron and turn into gold.

"Then the school realized that the accelerator was going to produce radiation, and parents and students freaked out and encouraged me to go to a university," Scully recalls with a laugh. His transfer to the University of California, Berkeley was approved while he was still a junior in high school.

But despite Scully's academic rise, he felt unsettled and directionless. The world appeared to be unraveling around him. His dad, who worked for the military, terrified him with stories about nuclear winters; his father's job called for using Bay Area weather forecasts to figure out where nuclear fallout would go in the event of a Soviet missile strike on California. At the same time, President Lyndon Johnson was sending more and more troops and bombs into Vietnam.

Scully's LSD trip didn't just expose him to another realm of existence, it gave him a mission. As he later wrote: "I saw the world as a place where most people lived lives of quiet desperation, working in jobs they hated to earn rewards that turned out to be tasteless and unsatisfying. Hypocrisy and hatred, double-dealing and cheating seemed to be the way of life in the business world. Ecologically, the world was clearly headed for disaster . . . . Our technological power to control (and destroy) our environment and fellow humans was increasing, at an explosive rate, but our understanding of ourselves, our relationships to each other and the universe around us, was not . . . . This was the gap that I believed psychedelics could help close."

Douglas had similar thoughts. As the two came down from their LSD trip, they determined that they would find a way to make as much LSD as possible and give it all away, for free, to whoever wanted it. They were going to save the world with psychedelics.

They had no illusions that this task would be easy. While LSD was still legal in 1965, Scully figured it wouldn't remain so forever. "I knew I was going to have to break some laws and do things that weren't right for this higher cause," he explains. "It was that sense of breaking eggs to make omelets."

Scully had a basic understanding of organic chemistry, but knew he needed to learn more in order to produce high-quality acid. The bookshelves at UC Berkeley's library provided a good start, but his real break would come though meeting an LSD legend, the man who'd created the first acid he'd taken.

The introduction came through one of Scully's other roommates, Diana Nason. She'd met Augustus Owsley Stanley III at a party thrown by Ken Kesey, the eclectic writer of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest,* who was hanging with a group of psychedelic evangelists who called themselves the Merry Pranksters. The Pranksters didn't believe in privacy and had taken off all the doors leading into bedrooms and bathrooms in Kesey's house. But Nason and Stanley managed to find a closet that still had a door, and that's where they got to know each other.

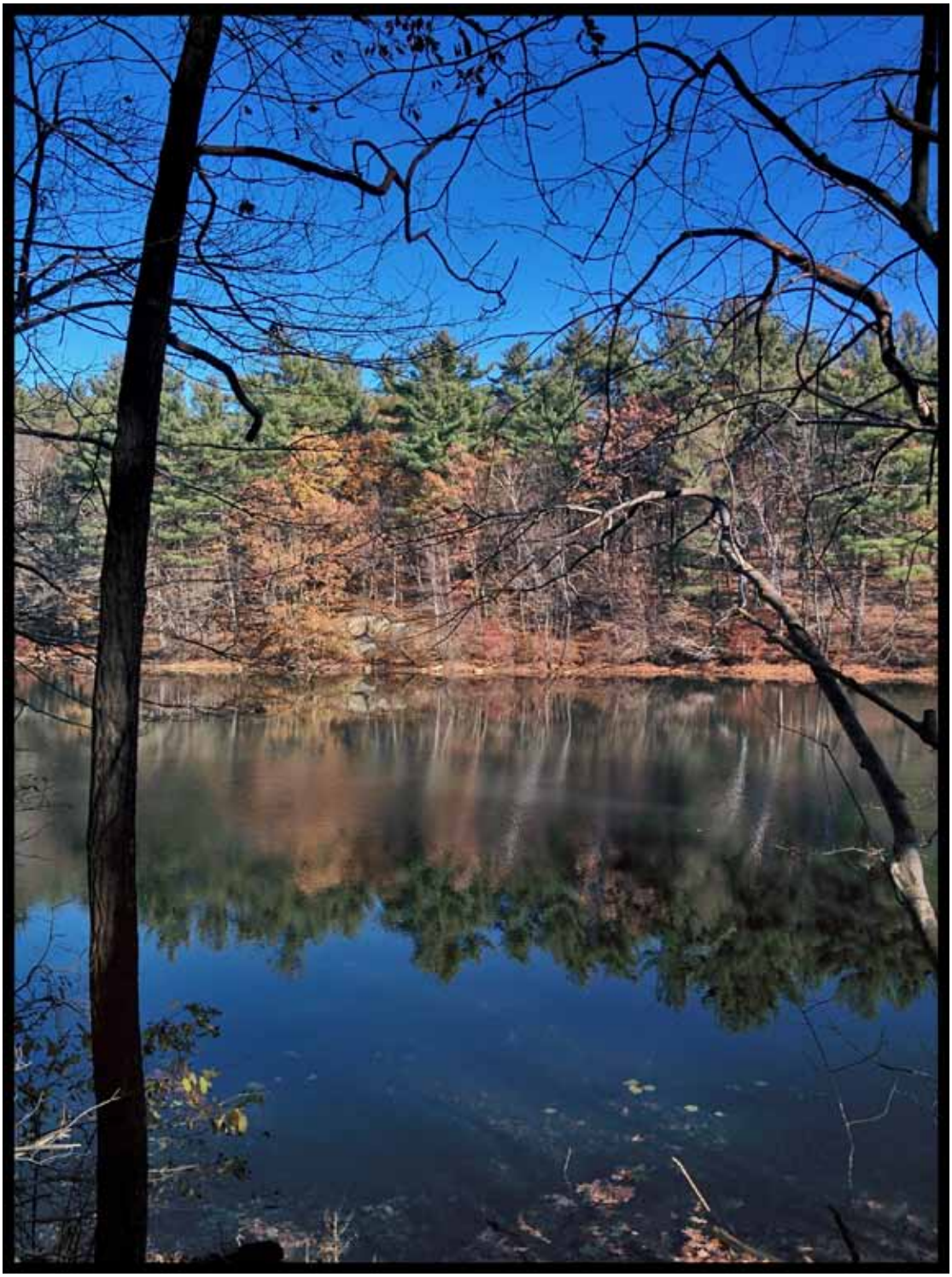
Not long after, Stanley came calling at Scully's house in Berkeley. He'd learned some intriguing information from Nason. "She'd told him that she had this landlord with a crazy idea of wanting to turn the world on to LSD, and he was looking for lysergic acid," recalls Scully.

Stanley was rather impressed by Scully's earnestness, but told him he was taking a break from LSD production. All he could focus on at the moment was a band he'd heard at a Merry Pranksters event: the Grateful Dead. "He'd had the experience of psychically linking up with them," says Scully.

Skilled at electronics work, Stanley was offered a job as the Grateful Dead's sound engineer, which he accepted. Soon after, he and his principal romantic partner, Melissa Cargill, invited Scully to their home to take LSD and meet these Grateful Dead guys.

It was a fun acid trip. Stanley brought out acoustic ceiling tiles and had everyone paint bright paisley patterns on the tiles that he could glue overhead to create a psychedelic ceiling. "It was a nice and relaxing way to get to know the band members," Scully says. He was especially drawn to the friendliness of Jerry Garcia.

"And so I agreed to go on the road with Owsley and the Grateful Dead," Scully continues. "I looked at it as an extended job interview for what I really wanted to do: work in [Stanley's] LSD lab."



iii.

By February 1966, Scully and Douglas had become roadies. They followed the Grateful Dead to Los Angeles, where Stanley rented a place in Watts that became known as the "Pink House": a three-story pink-stucco mansion that had previously been used by a religious sect, and contained built-in confessionals.

Living there was like joining a circus, Scully says. It was all an adventure for the shy, awkward introvert. Prior to meeting the band, he'd been a virgin—but that was a tough status to maintain when you were hanging around the Grateful Dead and dropping acid once a week.

Scully soon began advocating free love. He took a woman named Donna to the Pink House and, after she slept with Scully, she made her way through most of the band members.

That was perfectly fine with Scully—until he and everyone else in the house got the clap. "I ended up paying the doctor bills because I was the one who brought her into the house," Scully recalls.

Douglas, meanwhile, developed a reputation for being able to drive the band's sixteen-foot GMC truck through Los Angeles while high on 600 micrograms of acid. (A typical dose is 100 to 200 micrograms.)

Primarily, though, the young men focused on pleasing their mentor, Stanley. He was a quirky fellow, full of odd notions, such as forcing everyone in the Pink House to go on an all-meat diet. He was obsessed with perfecting the Grateful Dead's live sound and spent weeks buying hi-fi audio equipment, experimenting with large PA speakers, and rewiring gear to use low-impedance signals to reduce feedback.

An autodidact, when Stanley became interested in something, he'd find out everything he could about the subject, often giving lectures to whoever was within earshot, whether they wanted them or not. And what increasingly interested him were "acid tests"—large social gatherings where the Merry Pranksters would dose everyone with psychedelics, often with the Grateful Dead providing the entertainment.

Scully and Douglas were on hand to witness one of the more infamous of these, the Watts Acid Test, which took place in a warehouse in South Los Angeles on February 12, 1966.

While most of their experiences with LSD had been positive, they remember becoming concerned as they watched Stanley pour liquid LSD into one of several garbage cans full of Kool-Aid. The garbage cans had no signs on them indicating that they were "electric"—meaning that they contained LSD—and Douglas watched a family with kids come in off the street and naively consume some of the Kool-Aid.

"It became apparent that there were people freaking out," remembers Scully. "And the iconic freakout was the 'Who Cares Girl.'"

In the middle of the warehouse, a woman began screaming, "Who cares?! Who cares?! Who cares?!" Rather than comfort her—or care—some of the Pranksters shoved a microphone into her face.

"Don and I agreed that that was deeply unethical. That was like raping people," recalls Scully. At that point, he realized he might need to clarify his mission somewhat: A person needed to be a stable vessel and voluntarily agree to take LSD in order to have a positive outcome; you couldn't just give it to unsuspecting people.

But at the same time, the acid tests could be transcendent.

"There was a phenomenon that happened at acid tests—when things went well—where many of the people who were high would mentally link up to form a single additional entity, like an additional consciousness," explains Scully. "I believe that a lot of people who became Deadheads were people who linked up with the band, and they had that psychic connection and wanted to experience it again and again. There was something magical about it, no doubt about it."

By July 1966, Stanley needed more money to continue facilitating such far-out experiences. To raise capital, he decided to set up another LSD lab. He still had many of the necessary chemicals

in storage—which was fortunate, as those chemicals were becoming increasingly difficult to buy—especially the main component of LSD, lysergic acid.

This was the moment that Scully and Douglas had been waiting for. As it turned out, Stanley had been monitoring how well they handled certain tasks while high on acid, and they passed his test: Stanley determined that Scully and Douglas could be his lab assistants, at a salary of $500 a week.

Along with Cargill, the trio set up shop in a rental house in Point Richmond, north of Oakland, in California's Bay Area. As Stanley laid out the laboratory, Scully was amazed by the man's genius. Since Stanley had first manufactured LSD in Berkeley two years earlier, he'd figured out the difficult step of purifying acid using one of the methods that government researchers had patented, the Garbrecht method.

And he'd worked out other details, some through careful study, others through trial and error. For instance, his lab was lit with yellow bug lights rather than incandescent bulbs, since regular bulbs emit some ultraviolet rays and, when LSD is exposed to UV, it turns into lumi-LSD, which is weak and undesirable.

LSD manufacturing also involves a lot of solvent stripping—boiling off unwanted chemicals such as methanol and chloroform. A naïve chemist would use heat to strip solvents, but Stanley figured out that heat caused LSD to decompose. So he employed glass contraptions known as vacuum flash evaporators to reduce the pressure on the chemicals, which in turn lowered their boiling points.

In some cases, he was boiling chemicals at the temperature of cold tap water. Stanley also devised a "recycling loop," after discovering that each conversion of lysergic acid produced 88 percent "normal LSD"—what was desired—and 12 percent undesirable, "iso-LSD." By running the loop over and over, he could convert almost all of his lysergic acid into pure LSD.

Scully soaked up all the information he could. Once production was under way, he quickly learned that running an LSD lab was a 24/7 operation, since so many processes needed to happen simultaneously. To handle the demands, the team worked in shifts. "I was able to step in and handle parts of the process while [Stanley] and Melissa were sleeping," says Scully. "And Don would get groceries and dry ice and so on."

Another thing Scully learned: It was impossible to avoid getting high while making LSD.

"Once you start making acid, unless you take extraordinary measures, which we never did, then you're going to get high," he says. "It tends to get in the air and on your clothes. But what happens is that you rapidly build up a tolerance. So you're not hallucinating violently. You're not even that aware that you're in an altered state unless you talk to someone who's not in the lab. But there was definitely an electric feeling. There was a sense that we were doing something to change the world in a positive way."

Douglas had a name for this constant exposure to LSD: "Acid Makers' Queasy."

By the time they'd processed all of the raw lysergic acid, Stanley and his apprentices had 100 grams of pure LSD, or nearly 360,000 individual doses at the strength Stanley preferred them. That left just one final step: divvying up the product.

Stanley decided to switch his delivery method from that of previous batches. Rather than pack LSD in a powder formula inside capsules, which could result in inconsistent doses depending on how tightly the powder was packed, Stanley bought a tableting machine, which compressed carefully diluted LSD powder into a pill-like form with consistent strengths. And it was all legal, more or less.

In October 1966, the *Los Angeles Times* ran a story about Stanley under the headline: "'Mr. LSD' Makes Million Without Breaking the Law."[1]

"What kind of man is he?" the article asked. "By reputation, he is a drifter, a dapper ladies' man, and a professional student. One of his two ex-wives calls him 'just a little boy afraid to grow up—a Peter Pan.'"

But suddenly the legal landscape changed. That month, California became the first state to declare LSD illegal, and it became nearly impossible to obtain lysergic acid. Federal agents also began

monitoring orders for other chemicals that went into LSD. That's what brought Scully to the feds' attention on December 8, 1966, when he drove his green GMC truck to Nurnberg Chemical to pick up supplies. As he'd find out years later in court testimony, the stock boy who helped load his truck that day was actually an undercover drug agent named Orve Hendrix.

Scully and Douglas soon noticed that they were being trailed all over the Bay Area. The feds weren't exactly hard to spot; they tended to pair up in unmarked cars, with one agent driving and the other manning a radio. In sections of town with gridded streets, they'd employ multiple cars, with one driving north-south and another east-west.

But it quickly became apparent that the agents weren't going to pull over Scully or Douglas; they were hoping to follow them back to a laboratory.

Losing the agents became a constant dance. Scully and Douglas started employing counter-surveillance techniques: jotting down license-plate numbers, driving on side streets and, most important of all, never going to a lab or tableting facility unless they were certain they weren't being followed.

Nevertheless, the heat increased. Having learned Stanley's secrets for LSD manufacturing, Scully was itching to set up another LSD lab and continue his mission of turning on the world. He realized that the best course of action might be to relocate production away from California, in a state where LSD was still legal.

He convinced Douglas to join him on an interstate scouting trip. They managed to evade the feds and travel to Seattle, where they bought a used station wagon that they used to drive east through Washington into Idaho and Wyoming. The pair had envisioned setting up a lab in an extremely rural, isolated location, but they realized that wouldn't work for two reasons.

"In Wyoming, we learned that cowboys don't like hippies. We stuck out like sore thumbs," says Scully.

The other reason? To run certain processes in the lab, they'd need plentiful supplies of dry ice—which were only available in big cities. So Douglas and Scully turned south, setting their sights on Denver.

The moment they arrived in Colorado's capital in mid-December 1966, they knew they'd found their spot. While the Mile High City was seeing increasing numbers of young vagabonds around lower downtown and the railyards, some of whom formed communes in abandoned buildings, Scully and Douglas wanted to keep a distance from their most likely clients.

Instead, they were drawn to quieter areas. "Denver felt really good," recalls Scully. "It was a beautiful city and, when we were driving around near City Park, we saw that lots of houses had basements, which we also liked."

After flipping through advertisements in the *Denver Post*, the pair signed a lease for a house at East 26th Avenue and Ash Street. Using false names, they told the leasing agent that they would be conducting scientific work in the basement as part of a river-flow testing project for the Bureau of Reclamation.

Lab location secured, the two still faced the daunting task of moving their lab equipment from California to Denver without attracting the attention of federal agents.

Sure enough, no sooner had they loaded a van full of equipment than they spotted a car with federal agents hot on their tail. But Douglas had a plan. He knew of an intersection in the Bay Area with a short stoplight cycle and heavy cross traffic, and figured he could lose the tail if he timed things just right. So he drove up to the intersection, agents right behind, then floored it as the light turned from yellow to red. The agents were stuck at the light.

Scully was elated. They'd successfully evaded their pursuers. In fact, even though he and various associates would make numerous trips between California and Colorado, they were never followed to Denver.

iv.

Scully and Douglas moved into the house near City Park just before Christmas 1966. It took some time to retrofit the basement into a laboratory—building shelves, mounting "monkey bars" onto which they could clamp glassware, installing ventilation fans—, but, at the end of February 1967, Scully reported to Stanley that the Denver lab was ready.

Although Stanley had provided the funds for the lab, he stalled. He wanted Scully to produce another psychedelic that was still legal at the time—STP, which some said stood for "Serenity, Tranquility, and Peace"—before he'd agree to bring lysergic acid out to Colorado for another batch of LSD.

Scully was no fan of STP, having had a negative trip during which he hallucinated that he was trapped in a war zone. But he was willing to jump through that hoop while Stanley and Cargill collected their last lysergic acid from a safe-deposit box in Phoenix. That took a while, since Cargill had either forgotten the name of the bank or the name on her account; she finally found the box in May 1967.

Making LSD in Denver was very similar to making LSD at the Point Richmond lab. Acid Makers' Queasy kept everyone wired and focused, but Scully was just as high on the idea that they were pumping out a miracle substance that would save the world. With Stanley and Cargill's help, he and Douglas had converted all the lysergic acid into pure LSD by early September. The output this time was even larger than before: 300 grams, or about a million doses of LSD.

Stanley and Scully took the acid back to California for tableting. As always, the heat was on as soon as Stanley or anyone associated with him showed their faces in the Bay Area.

It was getting to be too much for Douglas. In a private meeting with Scully and Stanley, he begged them to take a hiatus. They could still pursue their mission, he said, but they should work normal jobs for a while until the feds grew bored of watching them. Then they could resume manufacturing LSD without so much pressure.

Scully and Stanley refused to slow things down.

"I'm out, then," Douglas remembers telling them. "And I'm not just out for the next lab. I mean I'm out."

As it turned out, Douglas made his exit just before things started going downhill.

On December 20, 1967, Scully noticed that there were ten times as many federal agents milling around his house in Berkeley as usual. He called Stanley, warning that his tableting facility might be compromised.

Sure enough, it was busted the next morning, and 67 grams of LSD that had come from the Denver lab were confiscated. Stanley was arrested.

Although he made bail, the bust initiated a long, drawn-out legal process that would consume him for years. That's when Stanley decided to turn his back on acid production for good, focusing exclusively on doing sound work for the Grateful Dead.

With his mentor out of the LSD game, Scully was on his own, which meant he had to go further afield for financing and chemicals. In order to find some of the latter, especially lysergic acid, he started making trips to Europe with another psychedelic missionary named Nick Sand.

Theirs was a marriage of convenience. Although Sand professed to have the same zeal for LSD, their personalities were polar opposites. "I got the impression that he was an adrenaline junkie of sorts," recalls Scully. "He was much more into taking risks." And that included hiring drug smugglers to transport various chemicals through way stations like Montreal.

While Sand took over tableting operations in California, Scully decided to set up a second lab in Denver. Now that Douglas was out, he recruited his then-girlfriend, Ruth Pahkala, and a street hustler named Rory Condon to help him.

Once again, they scanned the classifieds and located an ideal house, this one at 1050 South

Elmira Street, just blocks from Aurora. On February 26, 1968, Condon signed a lease under the alias "John R. Roberts," claiming he was a representative of "Western Research and Development."

The trio remodeled the basement of the rental house, occasionally using the lab equipment for side projects like making DMT or cannabis extracts, while Scully worked to secure the chemicals needed for LSD.

In June, after he left on another scouting trip to Europe, Pahkala and Condon decided to kill time in California. As they left the Denver lab, they noticed that the water spigots outside the house weren't working—a pump inside a well on the property had broken—but they figured that repairs could wait until they returned.

When Scully returned from Europe on June 22, he was surprised to find Pahkala and Condon in Berkeley. When they told him about the broken water pump and unwatered lawn, he had what he calls an "oh, shit" moment. "You have to get back there tonight and get the pump fixed, because the landlord is going to freak out!" Scully exclaimed.

Today, Scully believes that if Pahkala and Condon had followed his instructions and flown back that night, they would have been there to greet Chance, who would never have discovered the smell—and the police would not have been called in. (Scully thinks the odor could have come from spilled dimethylamine—one of the chemical components of DMT—though he has no idea how the spill might have occurred in the usually immaculate lab.)

But Condon and Pahkala did not fly back to Denver. Scully discovered that when he called the laboratory two days later, on June 24, and got a strange voice on the other end of the line.

"Scully residence," the voice said.

The real Scully hung up immediately. He knew that the lab had been busted, since the property hadn't been rented in his name.

Two days later, his lab assistants finally arrived at the house. As Condon pulled up, he noticed an unmarked van parked on the street. Pahkala, sensing something was off, told him, "No, don't stop!" But Condon went ahead and pulled into the driveway.

As they entered the house, they were surprised to hear Johnny Cash's "Folsom Prison Blues" playing on the basement hi-fi.

Detective John Gray, who happened to be inside the home inventorying items, was alerted that two strangers had just walked through the front door. After identifying himself, the detective asked Condon, "Do you live here?"

"Yes."

"What's your name?"

"Rory Condon."

Gray then turned to the woman and asked the same.

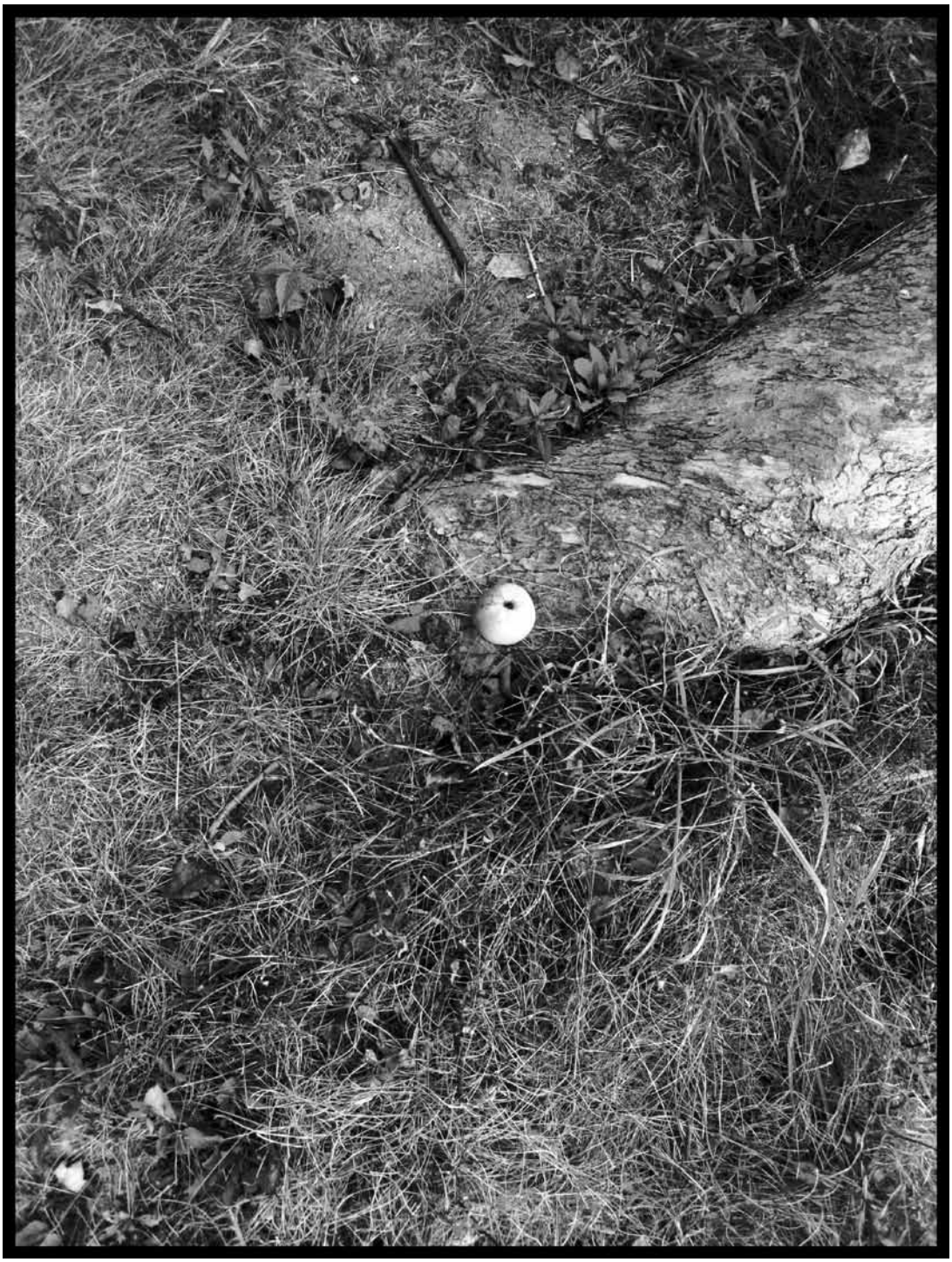
"Ruth Pahkala," she answered meekly.

Gray recognized the names from letters and journals he'd collected around the house, and he placed the pair in handcuffs right away.

By the time Scully learned what had happened from his lawyer, Al Matthews, he realized that he'd made some grave errors himself. While he was traveling in Europe, he'd missed the news that Colorado had made LSD illegal in early 1968. This state's law was even stricter than California's, with LSD production a felony punishable by up to fourteen years in prison compared to California's five.

Freaking out, Scully shacked up in a cabin near Eureka, California, where he could collect his thoughts. As part of that process, he wrote a list of all the things he wouldn't be able to do if he decided to live the rest of his life as a fugitive.

It included things like using his real name, visiting close friends or relatives, and subscribing to his favorite magazines (even under an alias), because it could give away his location. "I made a longer and longer list of things that I couldn't do, and finally came to the conclusion that being a fugitive wasn't for me," he recalls.



Still, he elected not to turn himself in after he had his lawyer check to see if there was a warrant out for his arrest in Colorado. Matthews didn't find one (but only because the warrant was sealed under a grand jury indictment).

Assuming that he still had time, Scully decided to set up another LSD laboratory to raise money for Pakhala and Condon's bail and legal defense. He'd lost his glassware during the bust but still had most of the raw chemicals—"the hard stuff to get," as he puts it today—in California.

He also had an eager partner in Sand, who'd been doing tableting work and hounding Scully to teach him the secrets behind LSD manufacturing. Together they set up a lab in Windsor, California, where they made what would become the most famous acid of all time. They called it Orange Sunshine.

The little orange pills were distributed through a network of ragtag bohemians called the Brotherhood of Eternal Love. The sales generated a significant income—enough for Scully to get Condon and Pahkala out of jail and cover their legal costs.

The money that was left over would later go toward Scully's own defense.

v.

When Condon and Pahkala went to court in July 1968, detectives Laurita and Gray figured they had a slam dunk.

"There was no doubt about who was there in the house," says Laurita today. "It was the most elaborate lab I ever saw in Denver."

The prosecution, led by a passionate deputy district attorney named Irving Ettenberg, was also getting a boost from the federal government, which was providing expert witnesses, including a chemist with the Food and Drug Administration. "We felt good about the trial throughout. We had ample evidence, and it impressed the jury," remembers Laurita. The two were convicted.

Laurita and Gray were even more ecstatic when Scully was arrested, on May 26, 1969, at an airfield in California, where he was having work done on a plane he owned. He faced a possible sentence of 56 years in prison with four felony charges (fourteen years for each charge) stemming from the Denver lab.

Through the late '60s, Laurita and Gray were the DPD's main weapon against psychedelics, which they considered a growing and existential threat. "They were a danger. No one could say that there weren't any permanent ramifications when someone used or abused them," says Laurita, who today works as a private eye. "Parents would come in with their children whacked out, and you'd sit there and wonder what the future is for them."

Using the alias "Sonny," Laurita used to go undercover—complete with a wig and a fake moustache—and bust people for LSD possession at venues like the Family Dog, where the Grateful Dead played, and some of the seedier downtown clubs.

But the detectives' satisfaction over the South Elmira drug bust wouldn't last.

Scully, Pahkala, and Condon all appealed their cases, based on a Denver ordinance that their lawyer found stipulating that even in the case of a suspected dead body, a search warrant was necessary to enter a property without a tenant's permission. The Colorado Supreme Court agreed to hear the appeal and, in October 1971, determined that the Denver police had conducted an illegal search of the property at 1050 South Elmira.

"To this day, I can't figure out what the Supreme Court was thinking," complains Gray. "We were really frustrated—and so ticked off that we had to give them back all that stuff to make LSD."

He points out that the responding officers had the owner's permission to enter the property, and even if a dead body doesn't require medical attention, that doesn't mean there isn't someone alive inside who might need help.

"It was jarring from the standpoint that there was no common sense applied in the appeal process," Laurita adds.

Scully calls the Colorado Supreme Court's decision "my one free trial." Throughout the Denver court proceedings, he was out on bond, traveling back and forth between Colorado and California, where the feds were still pursuing him because of his production of Orange Sunshine. They were getting better at tracking him; there were times he couldn't lose the tail. He spilled LSD on his skin in a lab accident and began hallucinating that federal agents were camped out in trees, watching his every move.

But the feds weren't the only reason he was ready to turn away from psychedelics. "The psychedelic scene was getting darker and darker by 1969," he explains. "There were fewer smiling faces on the street, and more people who looked like they were strung out on hard drugs."

While he was giving up his original mission, Scully was excited about another, legal outlet: designing "biofeedback" instruments that measured brain waves and muscle contractions.

But he couldn't escape his past. A federal task force investigated an accountant that Sand and Scully had shared, as well as the financial records of their wealthy friend Billy Hitchcock, who had financed many of the acid labs after Stanley backed out of LSD production in 1967. In April 1973, Sand and Scully were indicted by a federal grand jury and charged with income-tax evasion and conspiracy to produce and distribute LSD.

During their trial, which began in October that year, they drew the ire of Judge Samuel Conti when they lied on the stand, saying they'd been trying to make a close relative of LSD: ALD-52, which was still legal. They even had a friend make some ALD-52, then pretend to have dug it up from an old stash that Scully and Sand had "buried." The tablets were ready just before Scully took the witness stand, so he didn't have a chance to try them ahead of time.

When the government's chemist tested the substance, it presented as LSD.

"That's when we learned, boys and girls, that ALD-52 is very unstable and will decompose into LSD at the blink of an eye," says Scully, who adds that he regrets lying to the judge.

Scully was sentenced to twenty years in federal prison, and Sand received fifteen years.

They wound up sharing a cell. Although their personalities still grated, both appreciated that they hadn't testified against each other.

vi.

McNeil Island Prison was a maximum-security penitentiary in Washington State where people with long federal sentences were sent. Many of them had violent pasts, including an Eskimo who'd eaten his family. Sometimes inmates would detach the metal handle from mop buckets and beat rivals to death with them. "There's someone getting piped," Scully would think when he heard screaming at night.

But Scully's time at McNeil Island was remarkably short. Just before he entered the prison, his reporting officer had introduced him to Robin Wright, a woman who had cerebral palsy and a difficult time communicating, since she could only control motion in one of her knees.

Drawing on his expertise with electronics, Scully saw that he could design a button-and-computer program—sort of an early version of autocorrect spelling on smartphones—that would allow Wright to communicate much more efficiently.

Wright's family believed in Scully; they raised money to buy computer parts and lobbied the prison to allow him to work on the device. Not only did Scully ultimately build the computer for Wright, but he also designed a new computerized inventory system for federal prisons.

With the recommendation of the warden, Scully's sentence was dropped from twenty to ten years. Then, against Judge Conti's wishes, Scully was given an early parole hearing. The judge offered a furious statement for the record: "I have been involved in the law for thirty years, and I have never in my life seen any case that was so damaging to society as this case was. A man who was intelligent—I knew he was intelligent, everybody knows he was intelligent—but that doesn't mean, because he is intelligent, we are now going to give him the Congressional Medal of Honor, which apparently he is

one step from receiving. He may be the outstanding man of the year in your book, but he is not the outstanding man of the year in my book."

Scully was released from prison on May 29, 1979. He'd spent just three and a half years behind bars.

vii.

In the nearly four decades since then, Scully has been successful in a variety of fields, including computer programming and making biofeedback instruments. Although he says he hasn't touched LSD in all that time, he can't escape his reputation as a psychedelic revolutionary. LSD enthusiasts sometimes reach out to him, occasionally asking chemistry advice, which Scully refuses to give.

In response to the continued interest, though, in the 1990s Scully began compiling an extensive record on psychedelics, which he calls the "History of Underground LSD Manufacturing." He's located and scanned over 50,000 pages of primary-source documents, including court transcripts and newspaper articles, and has over 13,000 entries in a computerized file directory detailing specific labs, busts, agents, and more involved in the psychedelic movement.

He plans to eventually donate the project to a university, but is currently using his research to write a narrative memoir with the working title *Trying to Save the World*.

Scully has also been featured in documentaries—most recently, *The Sunshine Maker*s, which was released in 2016, and focuses on his and Sand's strange but fruitful relationship.

Unlike Scully, Sand went on to make more LSD. While released on an appeal bond in 1976, he went on the lam in Canada and India, producing more psychedelics, until he was caught in 1996. He passed away on April 24 of this year, at the age of 75.

Today, Scully has conflicting feelings about psychedelics and the role he played in their proliferation. Over the years, he's corresponded with people who were never the same after bad acid trips. "That's hard," he says. "It's clear that as much good as we were trying to do, we also managed to do some harm."

He now believes that his illegal production of LSD hindered valuable studies, including ways it might be used to help people with conditions like PTSD or autism. "We bear a significant responsibility for setting the research back forty years or more," Scully says. That research is just beginning again, spurred in part by growing trends like microdosing—taking regular, small amounts of LSD.

In retrospect, he sees that his original mission of spreading LSD around the globe was deeply flawed.

"The bad thing about scattering it to the four winds the way that we did is that there was no control to keep people who shouldn't be given LSD access to it, like very young children, adolescents, and teenagers," Scully explains. "With hindsight, if we get to the point—and I hope we do—where people can legally take LSD for spiritual exploration, I think that it should be treated at least as carefully as liquor is. People should be adults before they have access to it. Their egos should be fully formed, their brains mature enough, so that you're not dissolving your ego to [the point that you're not] able to recover in a safe way."

But Cosmo Fielding, director of *The Sunshine Makers*, thinks that Scully is being too hard on himself. "I don't think he should take any personal blame, because if it wasn't him who was going to be making LSD, it was someone else," Fielding says. "Tim did his best to keep it out of the criminal underworld . . . and keep it as a spiritual tool for growth and enlightenment."

In fact, Fielding believes that the activities of Sand and Scully, including the Denver labs, played a positive role. "They were fueling the global psychedelic revolution, and if you look at the impact that the widespread psychedelic use of that period had on society, it's profound," he says.

"Before the 1960s, no one had long hair, no one had sex before marriage, no one knew who the Dalai Lama was. If you were a vegetarian you were a complete freak, no one knew what yoga was

. . . and so all of these things that we take for granted, including freedoms and expressions and things that enrich one's life today, were all represented from the hard-fought battles by these guys. And Nick and Tim were right at the center of that movement. They produced the most widely distributed and highest-quality psychedelics of the psychedelic revolution."

Notes

1. George Reasons, "'Mr. LSD' Makes Million Without Breaking the Law," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 3, 1966, https://archive.org/post/352305/mr-lsd-makes-million-without-breaking-the-law.

* * * * * *

Raymond Soulard, Jr.

Labyrinthine
[a new fixtion]

"I must create a system,
or be enslaved by another man's"
—William Blake, "Jerusalem."

Interlude: A Tribute

It was the day the Trickster came to Luna T's Cafe. Long blonde-haired & blue-eyed, a near-always-present smirk, friendly one. He'd come from somewhere else not long before but had heard from the Traveling Troubadour that this place was quite welcoming.

The day began early at Luna T's Cafe, with the door opening & Mr. Bob the barman stepping in. A middle-sized man, on the slender side, short pepper-grey hair, a friendly smile for most, if not all comers. The Trickster would come to like him a lot.

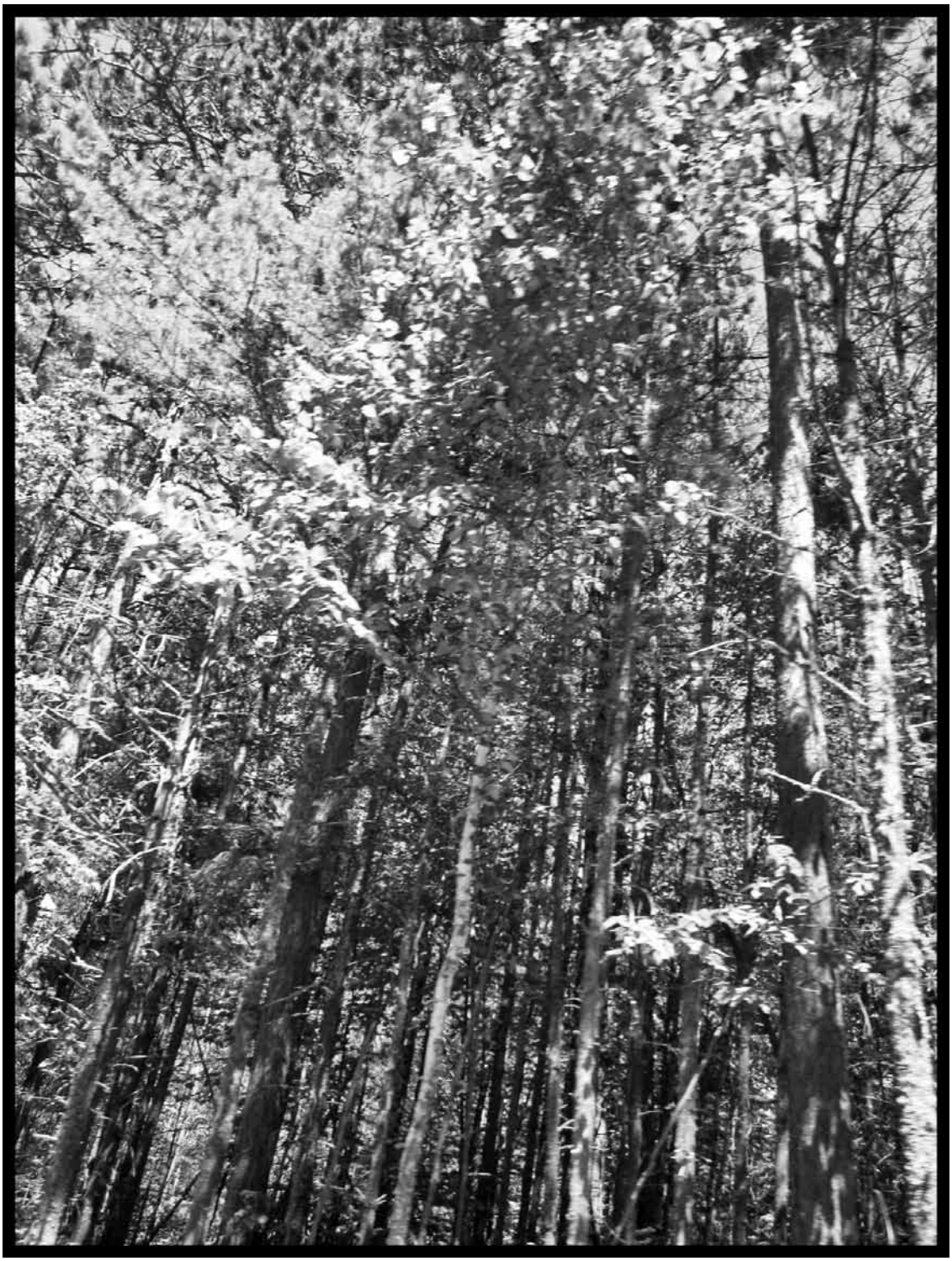
Pulls on the string attached to the neon sign telling the joint's name, & it being open. Could walk blindfolded through the darkened bar to the back room where he deposits his coat & hat. Finds his apron, old but sturdy, ties it on. Colorous splatter patterns all over it, gift of a friend long ago. Cackles in that back room. His & a mysterious other's.

Comes out to the barroom again, still no lights on, walks around turning on machines for awhile. Beer taps, jukebox, radio, TV.

Briefly back outside in the cool autumn air, linger, linger, breathe, smile, plucks his copy of the *City Tymes* from the milk crate next to the door. Paperboy gets an extra dollar a week to land it there every day, pull the makeshift cover over it on wet ones.

Finally with paper walks to the switch box on the wall behind the bar & flips & flips till the whole place is turned on & ready to.

Radio behind the bar is an old tabletop model. Learned how to fix it himself a few years ago. Swap out



tubes. Found friendly souls online who loved old machines too, & hoarded good parts to sell.

Bit of warming up, static, then the usual oldies station. The morning DJ had been bending the format lately, playing songs by that recently passed rocker Tom Petty, one a day. Said management allowed him one a day.

All rock & roll made Mr. Bob think of his friend Rich Americus, who owned Luna T's Cafe & led the place's house band, Noisy Children. And Petty one of Rich's greatest heroes at that.

Runnin' down a dream
rang the guitars
that never would come to me
ring! ring!
workin' on a mystery
ring lower
goin' wherever it leads
drums pound-pound-pound
runnin' down a dream

Song soars on shouts & harmonies, raises up & up, Mr. Bob turns it up a little, getting it a little more.

The *Tymes* reporting how another famous man was caught groping girls in his employ. Seems like all those big shots couldn't keep their hands off asses, up skirts, wherever something soft & shapely was near.

Wondering what it meant, *really meant.* Not simplistic newspaper ink, scandal vampires.

But just then an old, old man burst through the door. Short, indistinctly shaped beneath his winter-heavy coat. Crying out from his ancient depths upon arrival.

"Saloon-Keeper, the days grow shorter & darker! The trials of man more cartoonish, more desperate! Even in the golden sun we are become a cold, self-obsessed kind! Dreams of plastic molding, vague, crumbling, & the next, & the next, & the next!"

Waiting for more as he watches Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker settle on his usual stool, ancient cane resting by his leg.

Wondering if this man was ever young enough or randy enough to pinch a girl's bottom just because, Mr. Bob fetches the old man's craggy mug & pours him spring water, kept room temperature as his preference. His decades, centuries at the bourbon over, mostly.

Sits, staring at nothing, sipping very occasionally, Dr. K feels a small presence in his lap. Knows, without looking down, that it is the White Bunny, come in these ridiculously still living years to nap near to him, *hmmm* softly up into his ears, sometimes stare into his eyes & take him so far elsewhere he cannot recall here or there for a happy time.

"That was the late great Mr. Tom Petty, rocking out in his glories with the Heartbreakers, & this is

Commander Q keeping you musical company this A.M."

A long time passes. Knickerbocker present but not. Radio back to the more usual oldies. The Association, The Turtles, Gordon Lightfoot.

Mr. Bob reads on: "I was young then, 26. He called me into his office to discuss my project. Invited me to sit in his lap. He wasn't my boss but he was important. It happened a few times. I never told anyone but he was gross. I felt awful."

A voice suddenly. "He hired the pretty ones. Bet you every one of them had years of lap invitations to call their own. Bet they calculated the worth of each lap too, once they figured it out."

Mr. Bob looks up. Bowie the spy, long unseen around here. "That's pretty cynical, son. Is that what you believe?"

Bowie is tall, quite thin, one blue-green eye, one mushroom eye. Dressed . . . vaguely.

"I don't believe anything about human behavior. There are social norms, not universal ones. But what I do believe drives men & women alike are hunger for power, & fear of powerlessness. No gender or race or ethnicity or kind of human holds major stock in angelic or asshole behavior. We all shake what we got. Some shake it better. Some have more to shake."

"And that's it?" Mr. Bob pours him a glass from the unmarked turquoise bottle kept special for him.

Nods. Sips. Smiles. "No. But it's a damned good part of it. Everyone wants to grab ass, just that most of us refrain. Cuz we're trained, afraid? Maybe. And who doesn't want their ass grabbed, by the right person in the right moment? Nothing's straight & nothing's simple."

Mr. Bob nods. "But an asshole's still an asshole."
Bowie nods & toasts & sips.

Turns to the little blue & pink piglet sitting smirking on the stool next to him.

"Ya think?"
Smirk. "I do."
"And?"
Smirk but silence.

Awhile quiet again in the lit but still murky bar, & then Mr. Bob puts on a new TV show he's taken to.

"Welcome, friends, to *New Trip Town*!" cries the affable-looking woman with the microphone that looks like a kind of whittled-down branch. The theme song plays. Mr. Bob perks up. He'd heard this one the other day. Bouncy, electric fun.

Baby, even the losers
Get lucky some time!

It's a tense game for the very very tall black man with the long long beard, answering question after question; his prize, if he wins it, a map to the Island that houses the Tangled Gate. His dream to bring

his aging father to the Fountain there, perhaps restore him to health, or at least make his passing less excruciating.

"Where is the Tangled Gate from?"
"Emandia!"
"Who lives under the Tangled Gate?"
"The Creatures!"
"Who lives in the Cave?"
"The Beast!"
"How does the Princess navigate the Gate!"
"The box of threads!"

Aunt, she of the long braid & heavy boots, agelessly handsome, turns to the TV camera & says, "Two more questions tomorrow for the Grand Prize!"

Mr. Bob turns down the TV as live music erupts from the other room. *New Trip Town* shifts a few times before it seems to synch with the music:

> * A cartoon Mr. Tom Petty racing with a small cigar chomping imp through the wilds of Dreamland
> * A guitar strumming Mr. Tom Petty riding high through the late '80s mall wasteland of LA
> * A Mad Hatter Mr. Tom Petty & his Mad Cohorts torturing a blonde Alice before feasting upon her
> * A mad scientist Tom Petty waltzing with a dead blonde siren through a narrow mansion's darkened rooms

"It's about power & death!" cries a wildly drunken Bowie as he leads the White Bunny, the blue & pink piglet, & some little black & white pandy bears he found one time cackling on the ceiling of the men's room, leads them all to the band room to dance.

The Trickster strolls in quietly in the midst of all this, long purple coat & tails, handsome top hat, small round spectacles. Blonde, blue-eyed. Wordless, he finds himself a corner to pause & take this all in. Beautiful smirk. Sitting right beneath the Hendrix at Woodstock '69 poster. Of course.

Thank you, Mr. Tom Petty. Your music ever makes me happy. You have my love always.

lxxxv.

I woke up in the White Woods, wasn't sure how I'd gotten there. I lied there on the Woodsy floor, trying to reach back in my mind, eyes closed, breathing calm, thinking. *How did I get here? Am I injured? No. I don't feel injured. Sore? A little.*

There's a small glass jar, clear, with a brown screw cap, on the ground near me, half-filled with what looks like orange juice, & I pick it up. Half drunk? Half drunk. Weird thought: should I drink the rest? I don't yet.

Lying here on the Woodsy floor for hours on end, sleeping or whatever it is I was doing, passed out maybe? *How did I get here?* Eventually, I find myself also sinking down below the Woodsy floor where I have been lying, below what's around me, below questions about injury & feeling. Pull my glass jar

along with me, & the sinking is slow enough to allow me to unscrew the cap & sip, sip again. Tis orange juice indeed. Is it electrified? I'd bet so, given all this unknowing of mine.

I find myself traveling again through a city, with others, traveling together. I don't see their faces but we're walking close together, familiarly, there's a sort of complementariness to our pace, to the way we swing our arms & move our legs. Some of us are bigger, some are smaller, some walk naturally faster, some slower, but there's a familiarity to it.

And in my plaid green jacket front pocket is my dear friend Pirth, glowing & purple furred & ribboned & bowed as ever. I bend my head down, he reaches up paw to pat my nose. At one point, we end up on a hill above the city & I'm just trying to figure it out. *What does all this mean to that me, who's lying a little bit sore on the Woodsy floor, there, over there? I can see you, over there, lying on that Woodsy floor. You can see me. Can you see me? Yes, I can see you, with those familiar people on that hill looking down on a city. How did we? I don't know. Am I the past & you're the future, or vice versa? Did I go from city to Woods or Woods to city? I'm not sure. Are we happening together at the same time, on parallel tracks? Which one of me is lying alone, deep in the White Woods, & which one of me is on this hill, sitting among these dear people whose faces I can't quite see, looking down on the city, thinking almost everything is in sight?*

I reach across my hand to you to grasp yours. Warm, familiar, a flow between that is different & the same. I lose myselfs in this awhile, then a purple furry paw touches too, & *ahhh*, I see the Woods around me, I see the city down there below, our hands release though we each now find a Pirth nearby. *Lovely.*

lxxxvi.

Watch him build that world, watch him puff them out from his fingertips, look at that, look at that one, it's green & blue, look at that one, it's roiling with earthquakes, look at that one, it's a million suns in one, look at that one, look at that one, look at that one.

I nod at Pirth & he resumes dancing our way through the White Woods, merrily, are we still in the Attic as well?

lxxxvii.

Along & along in the White Woods & at first there seems no sign of people-folks. Their ways & things. And there's no paths, not a one, & I'm not bound for somewhere, so I'm not looking for a path. I'm not looking for anything. I look at the tree trunks, some of them smooth, some of them gnarled, branches in every direction, leaves of different colors, needles, the bushes below. Everything is almost still, there's just a bit of a wind, just a bit of something moving in addition to me.

Sipping on jar of electric orange juice, watching Pirth dance ahead of me, marveling at how, in a way, he is a kind of juice, & these White Woods too, in their way, & I suppose even human consciousness too.

These White Woods are peaceful. Safe? Safe. And I suppose that the unstillness here makes me feel better because if it was completely still here, & I was the only one moving, the only entity, the only thing, I'd feel like I'm troubling the stillness, but the wind, if wind is sentient, if it is, if it isn't, it assures me that no, I move, other things move. Maybe things move that I can't even see.

Pirth isn't still. Almost never still.
And human things aren't still, beat & breath, beat & breath.

And the world isn't still. Ever. *Not now. Ever.*

And I come upon, & it's shocking, I come upon a man-made thing. It's hard to figure what it is. It's a long structure, sort of dilapidated, looks like it's been assembled over the course of decades or centuries. There's rust on some of it, looks reinforced in some places. I walk in, & it's like entering into a tunnel from that almost-stillness that I was in.

I & Pirth. I'm not an I in his company. Don't know what he is, what I am, but here we are, a *we*.

I see that many kinds of metal & wooden structures have been bolted, nailed, strapped, taped together, to form a tunnel, & I wonder where it's going to bring me, if anywhere at all. And then I come to a kind of a brightly lit place, strangely colored but not disturbing. There's curvy seats that are sort of built into the wall, & the floors are soft, & the ceiling vague, almost space-age.

Pirth doesn't come in. Not even a sniff. I guess, hope, I'll find him again when I come outside.

I find my seat along the wall. It smoothes into me, gathers me in softly & firmly. There's a fireplace nearby, wasn't there just a moment ago, but there it is & it's not been started. I find my pencil & my little notebook, & I think maybe to scribble a word or two, but then I see that my thumb's nail is split & bloody, & it's going to be hard to write anything. I don't know whether to keep on, go back, or stay awhile.

lxxxviii.

It all come down to what you're gonna do, & how you're gonna do it, & that counts almost everywhere, in all types of situations. I was in the back of a Jeep, back where I come from. I was riding with an old friend, laughing, colorful. One of those guys you meet along the way that's just bigger than everybody else. Pays attention in a certain way, loves the music more, loves everything more. Wails pretty on his guitar till deep in the night becomes early in the morning.

It's nice to see him with a friend now. They like to harmonize, to push each other.

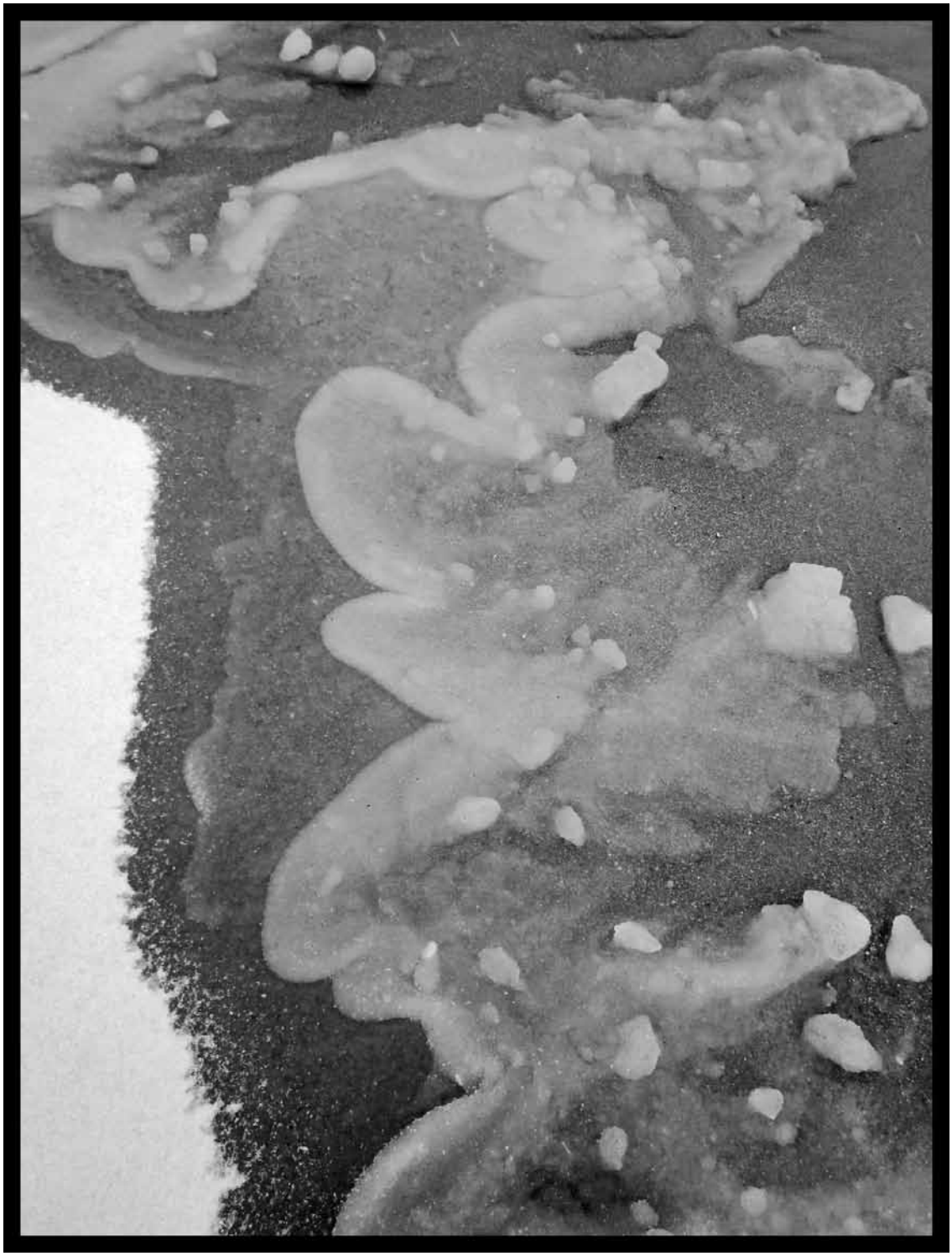
Back then we ended up at a party, & there's another old friend of mine, & this one is from a *long* time ago. He's young, he's in his glories. His eyes are bright & his mind is alert & crazy & free, beautiful. I listen & I look. *Do it again, do it again.*

Voices remain. On page, on tape. Laughing. Unknowing the future. *Just laughing right now*.

But then someone reminds me of something, & I realize that I left my bag of notebooks out in the Jeep, & so I have to go get them. So I leave the party, the sweet blunt smoke & the happy high music, James McGunn & such, & there's some girls, & they're even the friendly kind, though maybe not *too* friendly, but friendly enough, & there's food & everything. I feel welcomed, I feel alright, *something*.

[She lingers, smiles, takes my book, says she'll wait for me.]

I come out & where's that Jeep? That Jeep had my bags of notebooks, *Oh man, shit. Hey, where'd that Jeep go? Hey, you know those guys, you know the guy that drives that Jeep, where's he live? No, man, no, man, tell me.* ***It's OK, I need to know.***



Yeah listen, can you give me a ride over there? Really, I left my bag of notebooks in the back of the guy's Jeep, & I'm not sure where he lives or where he works but, man, if we can just catch him, it'd be all good. ***Can we do that please?*** *No, really, just give me a ride, it's just a bag of notebooks but it's important to me, it really is. Why'd I lose it? Why'd I lose it?*

I didn't. Only in fearsome dreams.

lxxxix.

Why am I in this bookstore again? I have a cold. Well, maybe it'll cheer me up, maybe it won't. I'm trying to find the books that I really want to read, ones full of music & high laughter, low despair, & cackling weirdness all around.

OK, follow me here. Follow this.

Buy one book, a paperback, & it's missing its first 70 pages. *What kind of bookstore is this?* Well, I guess that's not an easy question to answer. It ends in charts. Maybe those 70 pages would help you understand the charts, but *who knows what kind of paperback book this is?*

What color book is it? Hardcover or paperback? Bound nicely or cheaply? Heavy held in the hand or a waft?

I keep moving in the bookstore, sometimes that's a good idea, you just keep moving. And there's a series of old, tall, grainy-looking hardbacks. I don't know, twenty, thirty volumes of them on this shelf in a row. Is it a complete set? I don't know.

There's no titles on them. But I touch one, just to feel the age. I touch it very gently, & it thinks how long since it's been read. I touch the next one, & it's thinking of a funny joke someone told it, maybe the volume next to it told it a funny joke, that's my guess, I'm not really sure. All I can tell you is that as I touch them very lightly, I can hear their thoughts.

I can't see to the ceilings of this bookstore, has that always been true? And I'm telling you, I'm going home to bed now. I'm going to sleep off this cold for a million hours, but that doesn't negate the fact that these books, they're living objects, wood impressed with words, *living objects.*

xc.

When I was young, I worked at that market that was located over the buried spaceship. It was called Chief Seattle's Friendly Market, & I'd say it was pretty friendly, although when I started I didn't feel all that much friendliness from my co-workers. They didn't help me with all the strange cash registers I had to figure out, some of them ancient, some of them not so much.

[She comes back through the door. Only one cigarette this time. She's pleased enough by this. What do I offer in place?]

They really didn't know who or what I was when I walked in the door that first day, still in high school, asking for a job. I was looking for a place to be that I could really care about, for some people that would remember my name from one time to the next. And it became that eventually, it took a while, I'll say that. Had to fight my way in. Maybe that's true of any situation that's already established. You're

the new person, eager, wanting to join in.

[She was the only one who did learn my name. But I now believe she was a person who would do that for anyone, in any situation.]

It took at least a year for me to finally get down those long, dark stairs in the back, through the walk-in refrigerator, the crates of milk & juice jugs, other frozen items, push back the curtain, down that stairwell. Unlit & you descended & it seemed to get darker. Then, when you don't think it's possible, & you're thinking to turn back, even if you've been down there before, it starts to get a little lighter, & suddenly you're in this place that you didn't, couldn't imagine existed, deep under the earth.

[I'm sitting with her later, riding that bus, unsure where, unsure who, a book from a friend, my notebook, guitar, a ticket to as far away as possible.]

You're in a hallway, you arrive down into it. There's a ceiling, there's a floor, walls on either side, there's doors. It winds away, & there was this one time that my wanderings went a little too far in that buried spaceship, & I think I became disoriented, became dehydrated. I'm really not sure what it was.

[[She slept when the landscape got grey & perpetual.]]

[I hold her lightly. Blooms, light sweat. Youth.]

But I will tell you that I remember indistinctly ending up in a room, not knowing how I'd gotten there, laying on a bed, the room was dark, & someone was feeding me the most delicious soup. I'd never tasted anything like it before, & I was being fed by a kindly, furred paw. And the paw that fed me that soup, & sort of touched my nose & made a gesture, when I had eaten the good soup, *go back to sleep, it's OK.* As I faded, feeling safer than maybe ever, I felt the paws lift up my head gently, & pull a hat onto me. *A fisher hat?*

[Of course, Pirth. You stay so perfect with me. You *hmmm* so.]

And eventually I woke up, & was able to make my way back, no problem. I wasn't nearly as far from the exit as I'd thought.

But I remember that all these years later. It was unique among the many adventures I had down there in that buried spaceship. Never told this to anyone before tonight. It's not in any of the five Mulronie the Space Pirate books. Not even the secret sixth volume. But now you know.

I blink. Oh. The Attic. But wait.

A light ahead. Daylight. I see Pirth dancing right into it. I follow, wondering. Following him, following her.

xci.

This morning I woke from a dream of a car crash. I was with a friend who as he drove us along was getting angrier & angrier & we blew through a red light. I panicked, yelled.

This didn't help but, for some reason, a swerving road maybe, we slowed, & this I think saved our lives when our car ran head on into a tall wooden pillar.

I watched as like in slow motion our car drives straight into this pillar; the pillar splits the hood & cracks the windshield & crushes into the area we sit in.

Car destroyed yet we're OK. Shaken but OK.

Stopped. Sit a moment quiet.

I'm thinking: *call the cops*. But I don't move.

Why divert this book to this dream?

I'm not sure. A car crash begins most versions of **RemoteLand**. Is that enough?

Try something else.

I get out of the car & sit on its shattered hood. My friend, whatever he was, seems gone.

But another friend dances 3 hops from street to my knee. *Pirth*. Lean down to him, receive his pat upon my nose.

OK. Fine.

I look closely at Pirth. "Can you lead me back to the White Woods to where Flossie Flea is waiting for me?"

His dark eyes hold me close, closer, & I hear the *hmmm* from his mind to mine or, better said, shared by us now. He hops off my knee & I stand up.

Look around. What was all this? Who was that friend? It's a street, though its buildings lean this way & that like broken teeth. I can see why we slowed down, the street twisting & looping impossibly to the wooden pillar we hit.

Step over to the pillar. It's undamaged by the car. I look up. Rises up. Up. *Up.* I see no top.

It's covered in symbols. And images of Creatures; reminding me of the complex symbology on the Tangled Gate.

Then I walk around it & it now appears to be more than the grasps of three big men around. Glows.

I realize the *Hmmm* is leading me along, there's more to this all now than there was before; Pirth leaps beyond me, at the wooden pillar, I follow & see there is a half-hidden stairs carved *into*, *within*, the pillar. He dances right up & in & step by step, & OK, I follow, is this here, *really*? Visible without Pirth, without the *hmmm* we share in mind?

Glowing as we climb, the air perfectly balanced between cool & warm. This the way to the White Woods & Flossie Flea?

Sure. Pirth dances, slow enough for me not to lose him.

xcii.

Does the Wooden Pillar become like the endless Attic?

We climb for hours, minutes, I don't know.

I want to arrive

Can we please arrive *now*?

We do. There is a door above us. Pirth waits on the last step.

I push at it, it gives way a little, I push more, it has something on it, I push slowly, steadily, whatever it is gives way, slides slowly off.

And push door up, & climb clumsily up.

Oh. Oh. *Oh.*

The impediment was my own hut's arm chair, undamaged. The door was under the chair. I never knew.

CC Hut, this is. And there sits Flossie Flea in the other armchair where my beloved sometimes sits too.

I push the door back down into place, & my armchair back over it. Sit in armchair for a breath. Pirth hops onto my knee to wait.

Flossie Flea smiles sweetly at me.

Oh. OK.

xciii.

Then she stands up smartly & holds out her paw to me. "We have to hurry."
"Hurry?" I repeat dumbly.
She nods, notes my dumbness, & speaks only half exasperated to me. "You know all this in your own peculiar way. You can help?"
It's a question like a statement & a wish too. I nod. Notice in passing I am smaller than before since Pirth is much bigger & Flossie too, like the White Woods relativizes these things for moment's best need.

As we leave my hut, I slide my neck's Burning Man 2003 pendant lightly across the door's plaque depicting a wildly smiling Imp. Cackles softly, door locked now but only to those unfriendly in intent. All others ever welcomed.

White Woods, how to tell. A glow always in the trees here, more or less noticeable by moment's need. But trees, true too, lovely as every tree ever anywhere.

No paths, tho a rare road, but mostly the Thought Fleas & Creatures & others who live here travel by *hmmm*, or sniff, or simple bones-knowing. I've mastered none of these, save knowing a couple of useful *hmmm*s, & right now I simply follow Flossie as she trots along, & Pirth in his ever-dance.

We don't go back to the Flea Domocile, as I'd guessed. Instead, we come to a great clearing which I recognize as holding a Model of the Ancient 6 Islands, depicting them when they were still clustered together.

Imagine a clearing in the woods that is filled completely with sea. It shallows at the edges & ends there.

But there are not 6 Islands shown in model size. Only one. I know why. But how to tell here.

Recently, the famous Travelers Daniel Joe Marie & Derek had passed through here, & in their company Miss La & Miss Ta, the famous Heroes of Yore, & the Heroes' retinue, the O'Cult, & Mr. Algernon Beagle, editor guy of the famous *Bags End News*. Traveling one & all in the famous Boat Wagon, driven by the Kittees & Friend Fish. They had greatly admired the Model of the Ancient 6 Islands, had come in fact because they were sharing a great Adventure whose goal was to unite the 6 Islands again.

Driving the Boat Wagon up to the Model Wide Wide Sea, & then paddling right in, & through the strait between two of the Islands, & arrived to the fishin' hole-sized pond in the center of the clustered Islands.

From there Marie, following wordless instructions from the Kittees, who had had a fugue vision of what to do about the Islands, gets out of the Boat Wagon & splashes knee-high to each Island, & reaches to the highest point of each Island, its mountain, & places a colored stone there. Six in all. Returning to the Boat Wagon, Kittees' bloo eyes point Marie to the sky & she intuits to reach with the only stone she has left, the sometimes visible indigo stone, reach it up & up through clouds & spheres until she touches a metallic surface, touches, touches, until she finds an aperture, & screws the indigo stone in like a light bulb.

Pulls her impossibly extended hand back, & the spaceship comes into view, the indigo light blinking on & off, crashing toward the earth, Blue Suitcase splashing into the water, & 5 of the Creature-cluster-style Islands fleeing far way.

What happens next is that the Travelers & Heroes & friends leave, figuring they have to use what they have learned in their Adventure to unite the actual 6 Islands. Off they go to do this.

But what about the Model? 5 Islands fled? How to unite this centerpiece of the Thought Fleas' Rutabega Festival Fleastock event?

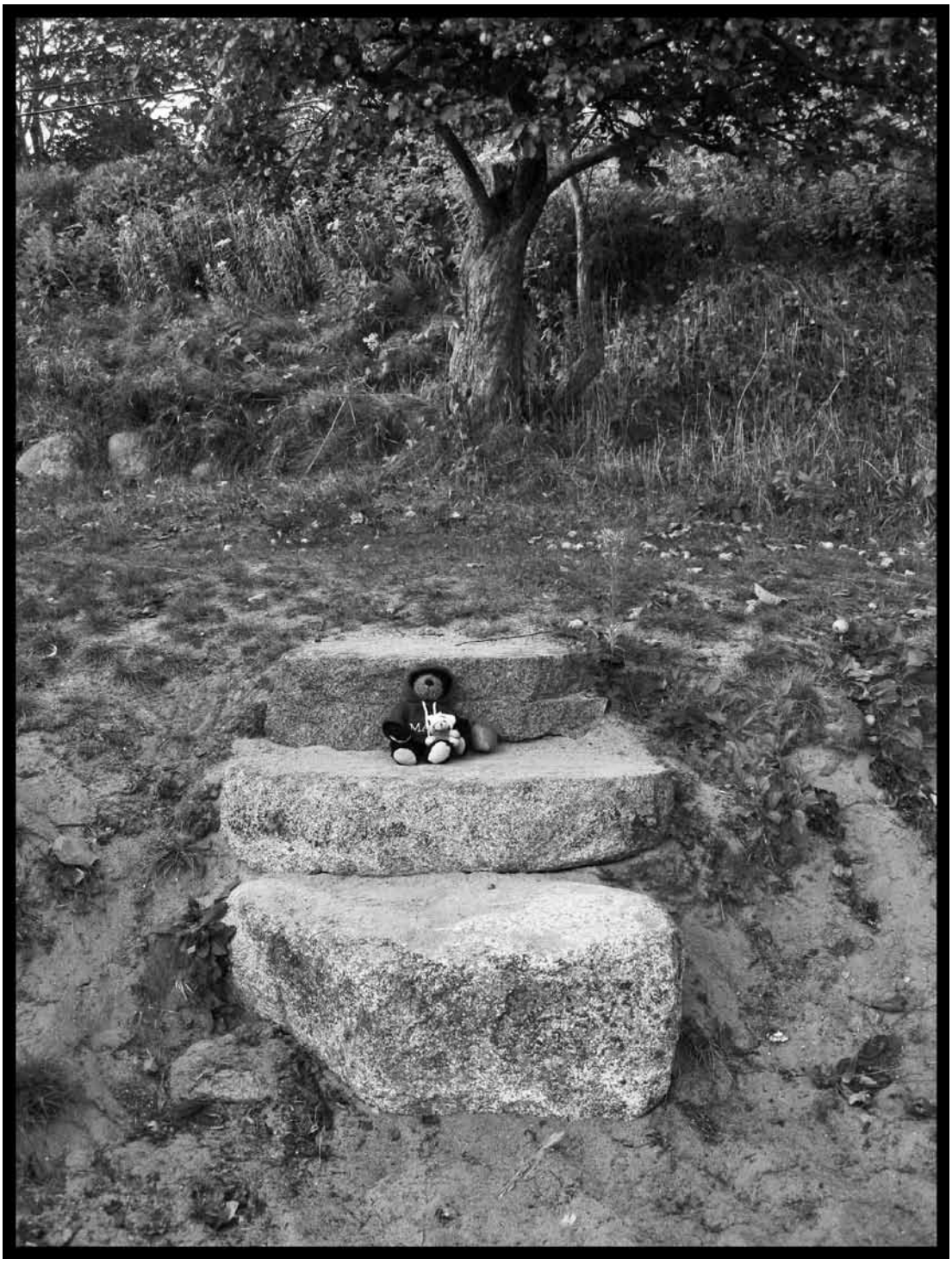
I nod. Look at Flossie. "What are your ideas?"

Finger on her chin a moment, & she says, "The ship crashed & it had the indigo beacon on it."
"And that's the master beacon we can use to summon the Model Islands all back," I finished, nodding. Ready to go.

Good thing too because up rolls our iteration of the Kittees & Friend Fish & the Boat Wagon, & Pirth & I hop in the back & I buckle us in (safety first!). Flossie doesn't though. Still smiling me kindly & friendly.
"Aren't you coming?"
"No. I need to see to the Festival & tell all our plan. You will do fine with Pirth," her paw on my shoulder reassures.

I nod, feeling very much not like a magickal Creature of the White Woods. Flossie moves toward the front of the Boat Wagon & I see her push a button on the dashboard. SPACESHIP, it says. She nods & the Kittees start to peddle us there.

Now this quicker mode of transport, mostly I think, for me, since I could not keep up with Pirth dancing at full speed. But he seems his usual placid self next to me, though still stirring a mite. His dancing ways never fully stop.



It's a far distance to the site of the crashed spaceship, & of course by when we get there it is long since buried deep below the surface of earth & built upon it is Chief Seattle's Friendly Market.

Hmm. OK. Do I simply walk in the front door? With Pirth & the Kittees & Friend Fish? Park the Boat Wagon out front next to that old VW Bug, green & gold, & that weird-looking van, rainbow-colored, the indigo stripe coming in & out, in & out, in & out of view?

I get out of the Boat Wagon & stand up. It's now below me, Creature-sized again. *Think*. Decide. Hope.

Pirth I lift up & stuff comfortably in the front pocket of my plaid green shirtjacket, where he's been before, head & paws out to watch comfortably.

I look at the Kittees, whose bloo eyes ever startle me. "Wait here for us." Pause. More? *A warning, caution, anything?* No. I guess not. They will nap, as Creatures do, just fine.

xciv.

I walk through the door & feel myself younger, lesser, scrawnier, eyes brighter, hungers less murky, & look around at this market-upon-spaceship.

Many aisles of food & goods, some narrow, some strangely wide enough for a car's passage. Is this intentional?

To my right, a long curvilinear corner arrayed with cash registers of varying kinds. Some look space age, some stone age. Noone there at the moment.

To my far left a kind of . . . cafe. Round metal tables with tops designed of various shapes of punched out holes. Circles, diamonds, clovers. Even a kind, dare I say, imp shaped? *Cackle cackle*. A stage too, beyond the tables.

And farthest from me, beyond the aisles of food & goods, I can see the refrigerator & freezer cases, the whole far wall. A thick metal door among them.

Without looking down or speaking aloud, I think to Pirth: *that's the way to the stairs leading to the crashed spaceship.* A furry paw pats my mind's nose.

Where to start, how? Start with story, use mind's fingers to shape the clay of its words. Go slowly.

I worked in markets like these when I was younger. Easy work to get when your resume at best is a polite eager smile & a half-finished college degree.

That's why I look younger. I look like I could work here now. My ragged blue jeans, old sneakers, the black REM shirt I wear. My long unkempt hair. Eyeglasses.

OK. Then I do. I do? Yes. I work here. I'm new. Do I report to someone? Well, usually there's a manager but if I'm trained, no need.

Drop off my beat up bookbag of notebooks & novels & textbooks behind the cash register counter & I step up to one.

OK. Hmm. These are old, no scanning lights or high tech credit card machines. Each one is different. Some look carved from Peruvian jungles with keyboards of unknown symbologies. Keep moving.

Here's one. Big buttons to punch in prices. A little square machine to slide through credit cards. A key next to the buttons turns the register on & off. I even luck into figuring the trick to opening the machine if needed.

Great. I'll work my shift & maybe try that cooler door later on.

People come & go. More or less ordinary people. They buy soda, cigarettes, condoms. Bread, milk, coffee. Regarding the last, I find the coffee station in a corner & re-learn the few steps to fresh coffee. Pull out the metal holder, dispose its old filter, fit in a new one. Packet of fresh coffee into it, slide back into machine, hit the water button. Drip drip drip coffee fills the pot. Make a regular one, a second, & a decaf one. Check every so often.

People are friendly, some more, some less. Someone buys a package of *Santa Claus's Ho! Ho! Ho! Cupcakes* & so I know it's near the winter holiday season. So I wish each season's greetings, try to rustle up a smile or something. These are old moves in me. I'm not a robot doing this; they're not faceless drones processing through. It's hit & miss. Some people are nice to anyone. Some can be nudged. Some are too deep in their own darkness. Some people are just assholes.

The daylight outside wanes. A few snowflakes but not too bad. I choose to believe the Boat Wagon & its precious folks are OK.

Finally, someone comes. A girl, friendly, aswirl in layers of black, hat, jacket, sweater, boots; hair long on one side, shaved the other, but at an angle, talks fast & soft.

She knows me as Ray, the new guy, goes to the local college, reads books, writes poetry. She's taking a year off college, saving to travel. Working doubles as often as Gary the manager will let her. A little high, watching the snowflakes swirl through her rented room's window all afternoon. But ready to go. Helps time pass more interesting & skewed to be a little high. OK then.

I listen, nod, try to look smart like I go to the local college & read books. I used to do all this.

She's pretty in a strange way, but I don't feel the itchy tug of attraction I used to feel always near females, still do in a way. My older self knows she's a lesbian, & even better, she's good in her own skin.

I take a big leaping chance. "I was going to go into the cooler now."
She nods at me, listening, & ringing up a sudden rush of customers on one of the Peruvian jungle registers. Her smile shares with all. Gets more than I did. Because she's female? Um. No. Not really. There's magick in her. Customers feel it as well as I do.

Anyway she nods, smiles, keeps working.

This is where the narrative clay is softest. Jump in? Yah.

"I want to see the spaceship buried under this store. There's something I need to fetch from it."

Pauses, turns, looks me with one green eye & one golden eye.

"Do you know your way down there?"
I shake my head.
"Go take a nap in the Boat Wagon. You had a long shift. Come back later. I'll give you a tour when things are quieter up here."
I nod, mind's mouth wide open, & follow her instructions.

To be continued in Cenacle | *103* | *April 2018*

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Notes on Contributors

Algernon Beagle lives in Bags End. He is the Editor guy for *Bags End News*. Books made from the stories in his delightful newspaper appear regularly in *The Cenacle*. The volume in this issue is a particular favorite of the *Cenacle* Editor guy.

Charlie Beyer lives in New Castle, Colorado. His prose appears regularly in *The Cenacle.* Charlie was visiting Boston recently, & we had a wonderful hour to spend together in person, first time we'd seen each other close up in more than a decade. He's as much a gem as the cherished rocks he seeks. More of his writings can be found at http://therubyeye.blogspot.com.

Ace Boggess lives in Charleston, West Virginia. His poems appear regularly in *The Cenacle*. His poetry in this issue (previously published in *Umbriate, The Mid-America Poetry Review, The Zacatecus Review, Blackwater Review, Clay Palm Review,* & *The Comstock Review*) was all written on a theme of titles from lines of horoscopes, the stanzas all tercets. *Ultra Deep Field* is his new book of poetry, released in November 2017 by Brick Road Poetry Press.

Joe Ciccone lives in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts. His poems most recently appeared in *Cenacle* | 101 | April 2017. The poems in this issue are more from a series called "Island of Bone" that he wrote while staying on Nantucket Island this past summer. Hoping for more new work of his again soon. His 2000 poetry RaiBook, *North of Jersey*, can be found at: http://www.scriptorpress.com/raibooks/northofjersey.html

Judih Haggai lives at Kibbutz Nir Oz in Israel. Her poetry appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. In discussing our various blood-family roots, she concluded to me: "We're all family!" Wonderful. Her 2004 poetry RaiBook, *Spirit World Restless*, can be found at: http://www.scriptorpress.com/raibooks/spiritworldrestless.html.

Jimmy Heffernan lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. His piece in this issue is from his *Divided Quantum* series, found at dividedquantum.net. He & I did some good conceptualizing work on this piece, building a form to best suit its content. Jimmy's new book, *Nonlocal Nature: The Eight Circuits of Consciousness,* was published by New Falcon Publications in September 2017.

Nathan D. Horowitz lives in Kansas City, Missouri. Chapters from his epic work-in-progress, *Nighttime Daydreams*, appear regularly in *The Cenacle.* He intends to see *Nighttime Daydreams* into a published book, whether its covers are wooden, virtual, or otherwise. Nice rarer treat to have some of his poetry too this time. More of his work can be found online at: http://www.scribd.com/Nathan%20Horowitz.

Colin James lives in western Massachusetts. His poetry appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. I believe he finds it a great relief when the December holidays are over. His new book of poetry is called *Resisting Probability*, published by Sagging Meniscus Press in October 2017.

Tamara Miles lives in Elgin, South Carolina. Her poetry & prose appear regularly in *The Cenacle*. She hosts a literary group at https://www.facebook.com called "The Curiosity Salon," which is a friendly online home for beginning & seasoned writers alike.

Martina Newberry lives in Palm Springs, California. Her poetry appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. While she recuperates from recent illness, Kassi & I keep finding more great poems of hers we have in hand, but had not previously published. Her recent book of poetry is called *Never Completely Awake*, published by Deer Brook Editions in August 2017. More of her writings can be found at: https://martinanewberry.wordpress.com.

Flannery O'Connor was born in Savannah, Georgia in 1925, & died in Milledgeville, Georgia in 1964. One of the 20th century's best fiction writers, known as much for her great short stories as for her two novels, *Wise Blood* (1952) & *The Violent Bear It Away* (1960). This issue's story can be found in Scriptor Press's 2004 Burning Man Books volume, *A Good Man is Hard to Find,* online at: http://www.scriptorpress.com/nobordersbookstore.html.

Mark Shorette lives in Hartford, Connecticut. His poetry, prose, & fiction appeared regularly in *The Cenacle* from #1 | April 1995 to #46 | June 2001. A fine writer & a good person, one whose fine, subtle spirit & booming laugh I miss. I hope you are doing well on your path.

Tom Sheehan lives in Saugus, Massachusetts. His poetry appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. His pacemaker is working out well, & he tells me that, since it's good for 9 years, he's going to "make a try for that run." His new book of cowboy stories is called *Beside the Broken Trail*, published this month by Pocol Press.

Kassandra Soulard lives in Melrose, Massachusetts. She's working again, helping out those in need, making the world a better place, as she does. Our 12th anniversary today. Lucky me!!

Raymond Soulard, Jr. lives in Melrose, Massachusetts. Thinking 2017 was one wild ride, survived, endured, sometimes enjoyed even. Still here. Ready for the new one.

Chris Walker lives in Denver, Colorado. He covers news & music as a staff writer at *Westword.* Prior to living in Denver, he spent two years bicycling across Eurasia, during which he wrote feature stories for *VICE, NPR, Forbes,* & *The Atlantic.*

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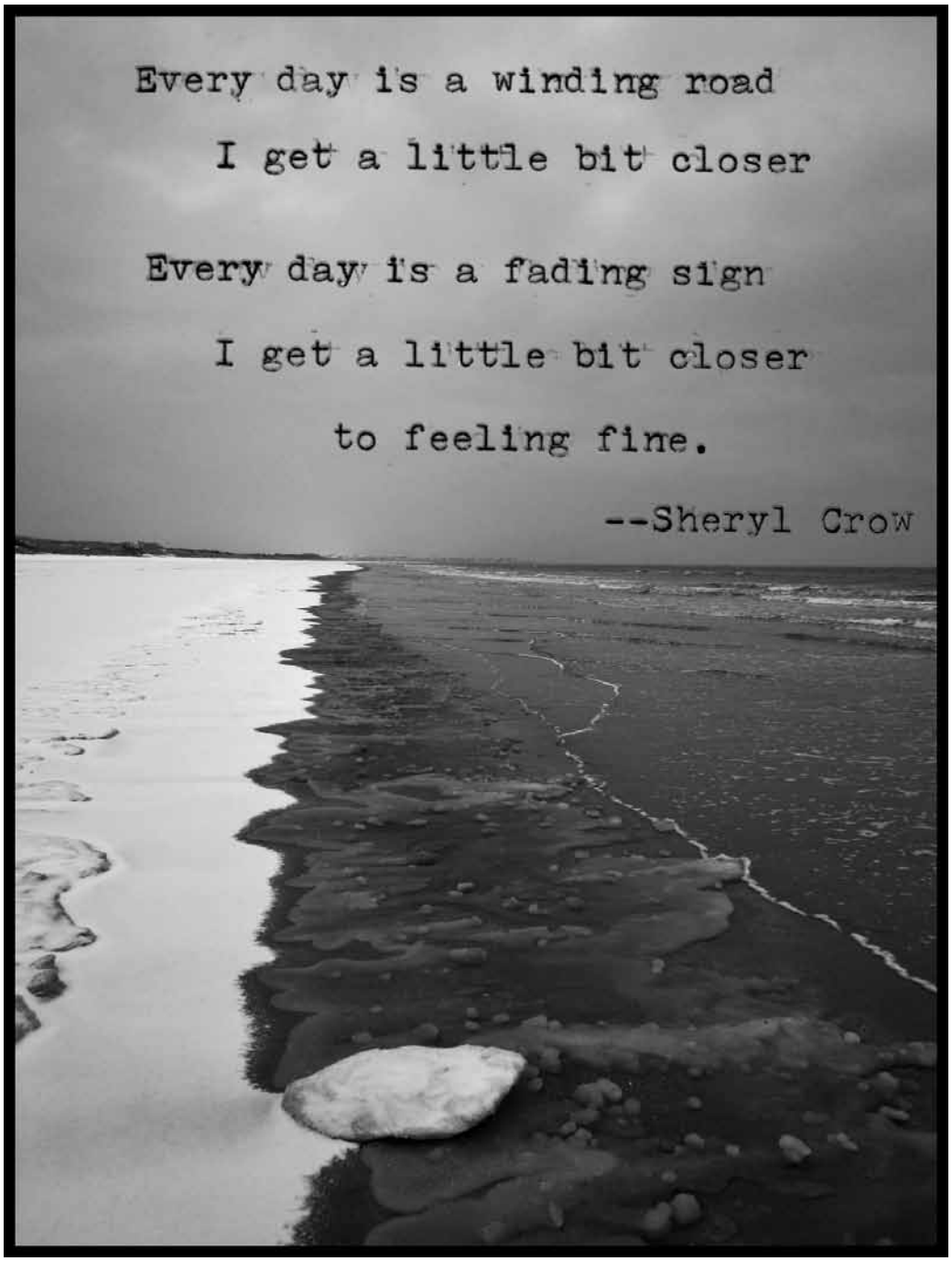
Every day is a winding road
I get a little bit closer
Every day is a fading sign
I get a little bit closer
to feeling fine.
--Sheryl Crow